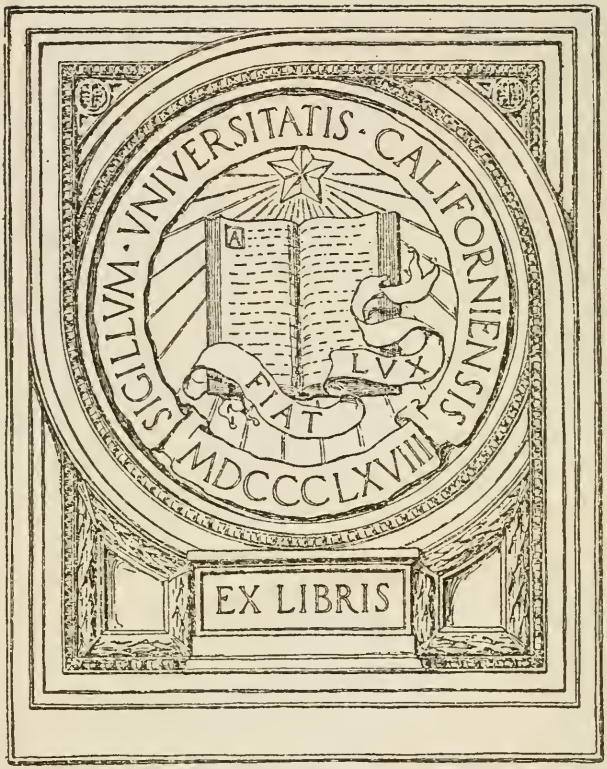
TWO LITTLE PARISIANS

PIERRE MILLE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TWO LITTLE PARISIANS
(CAILLOU AND TILI)

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(CAILLOU AND TILI)

AUTHORISED TRANSLATION FROM THE FRENCH OF

PIERRE MILLE

By BÉRENGÈRE DRILLIEN

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ARCHIVE

TWO LITTLE PARISIANS

CHAPTER I

THE FIRST MEETING

SHE was present. For several days I had felt her near me. Invisible and kind, she was hovering above; she touched me gently, and enveloped me. As a matter of fact, I knew she was sure to come. Every year, early or late, she comes, but I know not how. She always takes you by surprise, and is so powerful, in spite of her gentle air, that she overwhelms you. People do all they can to think of other things—there are strikes; there are revolutions; there are armies on the march, and ironclads stirring. You try to think that these are the things that matter, but you cannot. You feel through and through that these things are only fiction. The truth, the only truth you

are capable of realising is, that she has returned once more. I am speaking of the Spring.

In some mysterious way, inanimate things are the first to be aware of her arrival. Once I had a little friend, a very little friend—she was only thirteen ; but do not imagine evil ; I was the same age myself. She went to the communal school in one of the faubourgs of Paris, and one day she had to write a composition on Spring. She gave it me to read, and to this very day I can see her English writing, so awkward and childish. This is the way she had started : " It is Spring, so all the tables begin coming out of the doors of the cafés."

I was a little boy who, even at that early age, had read far too much. The only ideas I possessed as yet, on the subject of Spring, were those I had gleaned from books. My imagination was warped, and this mode of expression seemed a dreadful one to me. But to-day I think, on the contrary, that it is full of the profoundest meaning. When Spring is coming, the café tables know it, and they go out, of themselves, to breathe

the fresh air. It is still cold; the sky is grey; everybody is shivering, and everybody is bored; but they have been informed by a sure instinct. Out they go, and beckon to the Guayaquil panamas, that have jumped from their boxes, to rush and place themselves in the hatters' windows.

And after the inanimate things, the tiny creatures are the first to respond to her call. The gnats that dance in the sun, and the winged dust that seems to be born of the still tender and unripe grasses. For many years I had asked myself whence came this prophetic instinct, and, until I began to grow older, I did not understand. As you get old, however, certain of your senses grow more acute; that is Nature's way of squaring things. You do not hear quite so well; your sight is not so good; but your sense of smell is developing: it is learning to discover in the air, and in all around, subtle perfumes which it did not know before. So that is the reason why I know to-day that Spring heralds her coming by a new perfume in the wind, and some days later, by the scent of the earth.

The wind warns you first, for he is a great traveller. He flies very quickly, and stores up treasures in his flight. Each time he passes over a green blade, or a little flower, he steals away some of its breath, and thus, gathering as he goes, reaches you at last, richly laden ; then, at the first sun-ray, all that he is carrying exults and reveals itself. It is just at this very moment you say to yourself, "What is it? What has changed?" As yet, the intellect perceives nothing, but some unconscious thing in the depth of your being quivers with emotion, which makes the nostrils dilate, and the heart throb.

The earth is still more sensitive than yourself ; she grows warm in her turn. Far away, beyond the white, black and red blotches, which are the towns, the plough has stirred and reinvigorated her, and the lumps of drying soil send up to the skies the expression of renewed desire. The smell is very elusive, yet at the same time it is definite, fresh, healthy, . . . joyous, as the perfume of the ploughed fields after the heavy rains of July and August. It pene-

trates even to the cities, astonishing those who live there, because they know not whence it comes. As yet you see nothing new in the faces of the men. But the women! they seem to develop new features, new tints, a way of carrying themselves which is bolder, more sure of conquest. You may, if you will, lock me up for years in a prison without windows, where I can neither count the days nor the seasons, and then confront me with a woman. I shall be able to tell you if it is Spring-time, by her walk alone, by something in her eyes, or the way she draws each breath. It is wrong to call women insincere! They never hide anything that is really good to know, or wholesome to feel.

A few days later, the buds are blossoming, and the birds have come back. Then the sounds of the outer world are changed. In the first place, they are no longer of the same nature, and no one can be ignorant of that. A world, in which the birds are silent and the insects do not buzz about, little resembles one in which the sparrows greet the light each morning, and where the flies make

music as they dance. Then again, the ugliest sounds are quite different when they reach you after having passed through the leaves, while the air is more resonant, because it is drier; perhaps also, because it is more full of light. I am certain that light influences sound: a violin does not sing alike in daylight as in darkness, in the Spring-time as when the snow is falling. All this is unfathomable, indefinite, impossible to prove; you can only feel, or have a presentiment of it, but then the great forces of the universe are composed solely of imperceptible actions to which, without understanding, you submit. You must not be astonished if the blood of man and beast, and the sap of plants, undergo mysterious changes, when, in the perpetual darkness and equal temperature of the cellars, the very wine is sensible of the new season, and stirs, and bubbles. . . .

At the coming of Spring the inexplicable relations between the animate and inanimate are renewed; there are communications between them—struggles of latent life. The mind cannot grasp all this. There are no

definite words or melodies in Nature, but you are conscious of an impression as of harmonies linked together. Nearly all are joyous, but suddenly some burst forth, pathetic, heartrending, and they leave you filled with deep emotion, with the conviction that you have grasped the meaning of Life. It is only an illusion, but how delicious a one !

I am thinking of a country at the other end of the world. There the order of the seasons is the other way about. As soon as the cold of winter has disappeared, the red soil is covered with the rosy blossoms of the wild peach, for the peach tree planted there less than a century ago by Europeans, has spread with almost incredible rapidity. Towards the middle of November, the peaks of these wild regions grow softly pink as the bosom of the beloved, and the little girls going down to the rice-fields pick the flowering branches as they pass. At such a moment you understand that the feelings of the people who live in this land are not entirely different to your own ; that all countries, where there is a Spring-time, may one day be possessed

of a kindred soul, but that the countries where there is no Spring will always remain uncivilised.

You will perhaps be surprised that, in writing these few lines speaking of Spring, I have mentioned everything but Love. That is because Love is only one of the effects of this awakening, and follows naturally upon it. It is as though you opened at dawn the door of a dark dwelling—a dwelling where a little tender creature had wandered all night, seeking for freedom. She sees the bright earth, the space . . . life! and with a bound she escapes. That is all, but it is very beautiful.

It was on one of these new-born days that I first met my friend Caillou, and we were soon great friends, in spite of the difference in our ages. He is not yet five years old, and is the youngest of a fairly large family. His mother, who is neither rich nor poor . . . the most worrying condition of life, perhaps, when people have a certain position to keep up, and there are many children to educate . . . his mother had said laughingly that it

was Caillou who had bestowed this name upon himself, without knowing why. I had only half believed the latter part of her remark, because of my intimate knowledge of little men who are not yet five. I love myself in them; I find myself again; I know pretty well how their thoughts and imagination work; and that is the real reason why I feel pretty certain that they never absolutely invent anything—they only rearrange ideas suggested to them.

I therefore resolved to watch Caillou, and to make sure. I felt I was getting near the truth one day, in the Tuilleries Gardens, under the fine old chestnuts there, when Caillou, whom I had been teasing a little, said, seriously:

"You're always rotting" (all little boys who have big brothers use most deplorable language); "you're always rotting, and I'm going to drive my cart over you."

Now my friend Caillou's cart cost one franc and forty-five centimes, at the Hôtel-de-Ville bazaar, and it measures exactly eighteen centimetres in length. A ladybird would hardly notice it if he drove it over

her! From that moment I acquired a profound knowledge of the workings of Caillou's mind; he has imagination, even more than other children of his age. When he drags his cart along under the chestnuts, he really sees a van before his eyes—a very big van, drawn by four live horses. I even think he could describe the colour of the horses, for, like all great poets, he re-builds the world around him, and magnifies it at the same time.

Then I got on the trail of still greater discoveries. I questioned him with due prudence, and he confided to me,

"I'm a Caillou (little stone). I'm harder than all the other little stones. When I fall down, I hurt them ever so."

His little forehead, his knees and arms were covered with bumps. There were blue bumps, green bumps, very old bumps, some all skinned, others just new and swollen. Once they had said to him when he was crying, after a fall, "You've hurt the poor little stones again!"

Out of sheer revengefulness he had found consolation in this idea, and imagined the little

stones suffering more than himself. He thought seriously of himself as a sort of heavier stone that hurt the others at the price of the little aches which he was able to bear bravely in consequence. Thus his life flowed on, heroic and glorious, among the battles waged on inanimate things.

From this time I decided that Caillou was a great little man—one after my own heart—and told his mother so. She was naturally flattered, but did not show any enthusiasm, because she is nearly always occupied with important and pressing affairs. At home, or in the Tuilleries Gardens, she is always to be seen with a big work-basket, full of little trousers, little sailor coats, and also little skirts and bodices. And she cuts and fits and sews these things indefatigably, always keeping in her head the respective sizes of her eight children. For you know, when one has such a numerous progeny, one must be possessed of an organising brain. . . . When number one grows out of his clothes, new garments are bought for him, but the old ones are not done for. Slightly modified, they go to number two, and often

after that to number three, or even to four, number three being a girl, whom it would have been shocking to behold in anything but a skirt. As for the youngest, nondescript garments are the easiest; the smocks and pinafores of babyhood have no sex. That is why my friend Caillou placidly wore a costume which he had seen a year before on his sister Lucile. He had other things to think of, and didn't bother about it. But a day came when I found his mother alone in the Tuilleries Gardens.

"Caillou is not ill," she answered my question, "only just as we were going to start he made a scene, such an awful scene, I was obliged to leave him at home. I may be wrong, though; perhaps he is ill," she added anxiously.

And the following week I learned that, when Caillou was not very naughty, he was wrapped in gloom, and always naughty when he was not sad. His nature had completely changed, and he had become sullen almost.

"Really," said his mother, "he must be ill."

It is very difficult to tell what is the matter with tiny children. They cannot explain. They call all their body, from their neck to their legs, "tummy," and many, when they have toothache, say they have a headache. The doctor was sent for, and he sounded Caillou and examined him, without finding anything wrong.

"What is the matter, Caillou?" he said. "Why don't you eat your egg and your porridge?"

"It's nasty," answered Caillou.

"It's very good," said his mother, indignantly. "It's just the same as you've been having all the week."

The doctor said that he was out of order, and must have some medicine. Caillou swallowed pills, which they told him had no taste, found they *had* a taste, choked, but otherwise did exactly what was required of him, and remained wrapped in melancholy. It was not that.

At last his mother said to me: "Do go and see him. He loves you, and says you are his friend. I think he has something on his mind which he doesn't know how to ex-

plain. Perhaps he will tell you, for it seems as if he wouldn't trust any of us now."

I went to see friend Caillou. Most little boys are happy only when they have a great love for someone outside their family. And the object of their affection is generally a man. The principal reason for that is that they don't know much, and a man knows everything ! Also, they are proud of having a friend whom they think they will resemble when they are older, so big and beautiful—that is, of course, bearded !

Caillou came to me with outstretched hands, his dear mouth held up to me for a kiss, his eyes bright, and his little heart full of loving trust. He was still wearing the frock bequeathed him by his sister Lucile. At first, we spoke of serious topics, of things which interested us both, a dog friend of ours, a submarine which was wrecked the other day in the Tuilleries pond, and a little girl. Then he said to me, of his own accord, " I'm so miserable, old chap ! "

I put my arm round him, just round his shoulders, so that he should feel I was treating him like a man of his own age. But he

burst into tears, like any small urchin, like the dear little urchin he is. Really touched by this, I said: "What is the matter, Caillou? Come, tell me all about it."

He was sobbing too much to answer. At last he said to me in a low voice, so that I could only just hear, "All the week, they dress me like this, with Lucile's clothes, and on Sundays, they give me trousers and a jersey!"

"Well, Caillou?"

"Well!" said he, in another burst of tears, "how can I tell if I am a boy or a girl then? What am I! What am I!"

CHAPTER II

CAILLOU AND WOMAN

WHEN Caillou found himself really dressed as a man, that is to say, reassured as to his boyhood, he quickly regained his good temper and winning ways. The only thing he never could bear was that any allusion should be made to the doubts he once entertained concerning his sex. One should always be careful with children ; for instance, never to relate before them stories of things which have happened to them. If they are given to affectation and vanity, you will make little actors of them. If they are proud and refined, sensitive about showing their real feelings, you will wound their susceptibilities. However much you try, you will never describe an incident as they themselves experienced it, you differ too much from them, and cannot do them justice. There is no human being

in the world more solitary, and therefore prouder, than a child, and they will think that you take neither themselves, nor their world, seriously; the world they build of a mosaic of impressions added one to another, beautiful, luminous fragments of things, precious gems, which they are continually amassing.

As soon as Caillou was sure that he was a man, he behaved like one, that is to say, he immediately despised his sisters, or, at any rate, only treated them with a sort of disdainful mistrust.

"Caillou," said I one day, "it seems to me you are not very kind to Lucile, and she so good to you! Besides, she is older than you!"

He shook his head.

"She's a nuisance," said he. "Women are a nuisance!"

I was tempted to tell him that later he would change his opinion, but this would have been immoral, so I kept silence. Besides, I saw that Caillou was cogitating; he evidently wished to offer some explanation, and it is very difficult to give reasons for

opinions that are the outcome of personal impressions and mental pictures.

"It's like this," said he, "when I am alone with her, she does worry me so. She will play at being mother, or something, and it bothers me."

I gathered that, while his sister worried him, she confused him also.

"And when Lucile is with other girls," he continued, "she rots. She makes me turn round, and she cheats."

"But," I asked, "when there are several of you little boys together, and only one little girl, you pay her back, don't you?"

"No," he replied, astonished, "boys don't cheat!"

So in this way it was revealed to me that, from their earliest childhood, women, when they get together, look upon man as their natural enemy, and that when they find it possible to take a stealthy revenge, they do so.

Still serious, Caillou added, "And then they don't even smell the same! They aren't a bit the same!"

This innocent remark set me dreaming.

I even went so far as to ask myself in what way Caillou conceived of the relations between the sexes! But, truly, I must crave your pardon! Just as I am about to treat of this solemn subject, I ask myself if I have any ground whatsoever for doing so. At first sight it would seem, on the contrary, to be the only topic which is not of direct interest to Caillou, who has never said anything noteworthy on the subject. Caillou has never once appeared to be aware of the affinity existing between women and Love. He is a lover, notwithstanding; he loves all things with all his might! I know well enough that, later on, when he is of that age (any, and every age—even mine . . .) when women play so great, so happy, or so sorrowful a part in a man's life . . . a part so bitter, or so suddenly delicious . . . it is probably almost entirely these childish memories that will make him conscious of his happiness or misery. Whether he be petted or scolded, welcomed or frowned at, he must be . . . yes, this is the real point . . . he must be the one who is of paramount interest. Caillou can feel, as with invisible

tentacles, if he pleases or does not please, if he is understood, even when he is apparently incomprehensible. Pride, tenderness, self-love, the need to be first in some one's thoughts, all that constitutes Love, except the awakening of the senses, are his. And in his vocabulary, the only words that matter, words that will suffice him later, kisses, caresses, grief, pain, and pleasure, he knows them all, and even now it seems to him as if they had more melody than the others.

One day he climbed on my knees, and said, " You love me, don't you ? "

" Yes, little one, of course I do."

" Then tell me secrets ! "

So he has felt that there must be a thing called confidence in Love. He already has the capacity for love, but he does not yet love little girls !

If you can remember, his opinion is that his sister, Lucile, who is two years older than he, not only persecutes him herself, but joins with other little girls to persecute him without rhyme or reason. So his first opinion of the sexes is that they are enemies ! For instance, he explains, " When we play ' Chat

perché,' they pretend that, if they're sitting down, they're 'perché.' Well, that's all right! But when I run and catch one of them, one of the others pulls her on her lap very, very quick, so I'm always 'it.'"

He explains all this at great length, correcting himself, being as yet so little experienced in the art of putting his thoughts into words, and shy, if I may say so, of revealing what, for him, is a past sorrow. Perhaps he fears to think of the pain it caused him at the time, or else is afraid of being laughed at. . . .

So then I watched the little girls, and I was obliged to confess that he was right. When there are several of them with only one small boy, they behave like perfect little hussies! But Caillou cannot see that they are probably only paying him out, for he is as stupid as possible when left alone with one of them, or two, at most. They make love to him, and he cannot see it; he is polite, but bored! There must be two reasons for all this. The first is that they are much more intelligent, for their age, than he, and much less active. Caillou likes

running-about games : he must let off steam ; and all his talk, when he is playing, is absurd and extravagant. You remember that he wanted to annihilate me with his little cart of twenty-nine sous ! Instinctively he feels enormous, in other words, romantic, and reality wearies him.

The little girls, on the contrary, feel the charm of this very reality. They assimilate it in a far more pronounced and satisfactory way.

The second difference between them is that the girls have an inborn instinct for coquetry, and Caillou is destitute of the least vestige of it. Caillou is a reality to these little creatures, but, as far as he is concerned, they do not exist. This difference of opinion is a serious point. The smaller they are, the more he despises them ; he only loves what is big.

He has been taken to see Jeanne, who is also " at home " to Vivette, and the three of them are to spend a couple of hours together in the nursery. Caillou never disputes the decisions of his mother or his nurse, even when they take him to a house

he doesn't know. He has no preconceived opinions ; moreover, they have said to him, "You will be good, won't you?" He doesn't much care about these reminders, but they make an impression on him. Everything that is said makes some impression upon him, and excites his imagination. Besides, Vivette and Jeanne are very sweet to him ; there are only two of them ! To-day, it is not the instinctive enmity of one sex in conflict with another which is in the ascendant, but the instinct of coquetry. Each of the two little girls wants to be noticed more than the other, and they have both been dressed so beautifully ! The only difference is that Vivette, who is a visitor, has on a white sun hat, while Jeanne, the hostess, has blue ribbons in her hair : and she is dissatisfied at that, for a primitive instinct inclines children to see beauty, not in person, but in what is added thereto. To a little girl, a beautiful little girl is she who wears a beautiful dress !

To Caillou, the little boy to be most envied, even were he legless, is he in possession of an aeroplane !

Once in the nursery Caillou takes no more notice of Jeanne than of Vivette. He feels that they have no evil intentions towards him, and that is quite enough for him. He doesn't trouble about their efforts to please him, so he treats them exactly alike. That does not mean that he distributes his favours impartially ; he is just himself, that is all. He thoroughly enjoys himself, and the little girls follow him about, trying to make him take some notice of them. Now one of them lays her cheek against Caillou's, and Caillou kisses her ; then, the other does the same, and Caillou kisses her too, though without showing much enthusiasm ; but he is not bored, and feels quite at home.

By and by, they come to fetch him, to say "How do you do?" to Vivette's mamma. He goes off ingenuously, showing neither regret nor satisfaction. I don't know what is said to him, or what he has to say—that has nothing to do with this story. All of a sudden cries are heard from the nursery, cries and screams, which echo through the walls, and make the mothers rush to the scene of action. Something like a passion

of despair, indescribable, but powerful, has seized on Jeanne and Vivette, when left to themselves. Neither of them has really succeeded in attracting Caillou's attention, and for a whole hour their bitterness has been increasing. Without knowing why, they each hold the other responsible for it, so that the object of their rivalry having disappeared, the quarrel bursts out suddenly. They know nothing, except that they loathe each other. And Jeanne has torn off Vivette's hat, and Vivette has dragged at Jeanne's dress. Thus each tries to destroy the thing she has most envied and detested in the other. It is like the old naval battles, when the enemy always aimed at the sails.

Caillou says nothing, but he is thinking hard. Later on, he overhears this episode related to me, and he reveals that he is thinking, thinking " that isn't the way people ought to fight ! "

So I say to myself, " Caillou is a dear little chap ; he is ignorant as yet of the difference between the sexes. So much the better."

The other day, however, I called for his parents to go with them to some evening

function. Caillou's father was ready, tall, strong, and handsome in his black coat, I envied him; but Caillou had eyes for nothing but the white shoulders and beauty of his mother: he seemed wonder-stricken.

"How beautiful you are, Mother!" said he.

She kissed him.

"You must," he insisted, almost miserably, "you must come and kiss me again when you come in."

Oh, yes! Caillou notices the difference in the sexes, but only where they really exist in big people, and only in those he loves. In his mother, he loves his "maman," but he loves the woman also I can assure you.

Some time later I saw him experience in a few short hours all the pains and pleasures of love. This was a great surprise to me. I never imagined that the passion of love could find a place in a soul so young, and a body which knew nothing of sensual joys, but the symptoms which developed in him were of such a nature that it was impossible to be mistaken.

It was at the seaside that I next saw Caillou. A hundred years of romantic literature has made us somewhat artificial, so, foolishly enough, I was curious to find out if Caillou would understand the magnitude of the ocean, and my first impression was that he had no idea of it. First of all, I was rather vexed, as I should have been had he forgotten to say, " how do you do ?" to a lady, or to kiss people before going to bed. I said to him, " Don't you see how big it is, Caillou ? "

He didn't contradict, because he respects those who never lie to him, or make fun of him. If I tell him the sea is big, he is quite ready to believe me. It was easy to see, however, that he had no previous opinion on the subject. He reflected a minute or two, and then announced—" It's only got one shore ! "

I was astonished, in my turn, because, until now, I had never bethought myself of such an obvious fact. The ocean has only one shore, so far as you can see, at any rate, and that is why it gives you the impression of infinity. Now " infinity " is an abstract

word, and not in Caillou's vocabulary, so he expressed in his own way that, as the sea was a stretch of water of inappreciable extent, he did not know whether it were big or little. Besides, he could not appropriate it to himself, because of its very nature ; he could not make a plaything of it ; therefore he considered it as practically outside his world. That, by the way, is how most men treat the firmament wherein are the stars : they know it exists, but as it is out of their reach, they don't worry about it.

The next day Caillou had a boat, and was sailing it in a pool, and jumping up and down in this pool he raised tempests with his bare feet. Pebbles, which he placed here and there, formed ports, quays and harbours. Outside he had improvised reefs of rocks. By means of reducing the size of things he had managed to gain a clear idea of them ; this is the natural mode of procedure with the human mind.

I expected, however, that he would get accustomed in time to all the novelties around him, and would tell me of his discoveries. I was wrong, for he suddenly became speech-

less. At table, out for walks, even when he waked up early in the morning, at that delightful hour when children, like little birds, are so overflowing with joy that they twitter unceasingly, Caillou never said a word.

"It is because he is thinking too much of his game," said his mother.

The wisdom of this thought seemed profound to me. When children are thoroughly enjoying themselves they live in their games; they dream of them; they let the outside world go by.

What was Caillou playing at? I watched him, and discovered that he spent all the day with Kiki.

Kiki is a dog, who, as far as one can see, belongs to the Griffon family, mingled perhaps with spaniel and samoyede blood. He was born in a fisherman's house, and is not two months old. A little pink flesh shows through his long coat, spotted with white and black, and all day long violent feelings of joy, pain, hunger, greed, cold and heat agitate his little riotous body. Peasants and fishermen are, as a rule, neither kind nor

unkind to animals ; they just allow them to live. And Kiki had an incredible need of some one to play with him, and to love him, since he followed with the greatest impartiality any one who would notice him, especially children. What a strange thing it is, the way young animals grow fond of little children ! They become more than friends, almost accomplices. With Kiki, the charm of coquettishness added itself to that of extreme youth. He was the only little dog, and there were around him many little boys and little girls ; he let himself be petted ; he let himself be loved ; and he was naturally faithless, ungrateful and capricious.

Caillou's tender heart knew all the delights of uneasy passion. To please Kiki, to be followed by him, to invent what might attract him, had become his only preoccupation. That is why he never chattered to us now—this silence was merely the outcome of bashfulness.

One day he saw this same Kiki arriving on the shore with a ribbon round his neck, and the ribbon was held by a little girl called Aline, who cried out triumphantly, " We are

going away to-morrow, and we are going to take Kiki. Papa has bought him. He cost five francs."

Some people do not take children's sorrows seriously, saying that they are quickly appeased; for such folk I have the greatest contempt. A child's sorrows are as true, and greater than, our own—they seize upon the whole soul of the little one, and shake it with so much violence that, for that very reason, they soon exhaust themselves; and a good thing it is! If the sorrow lasted, it would be enough to kill them. Caillou fell down on the sand, as if his legs had been cut from under him, and began to cry as he had never cried in his life.

Aline only said, "As your papa won't have any dog, it is much better for Kiki to be with us. You can come and see him."

Caillou is too good-hearted to know of hate, but he wept the more bitterly, filled with greater horror at this hypocritical attempt at consolation.

"He will be yours! He will be yours! Before, he didn't belong to any one!"

I picked him up in my arms. Have you

ever held in your pitiful fingers a bird just released from a trap? It is nothing but one fearful shudder. Caillou's heart beat like that! I could have wept myself, and was infected by a sort of uncontrollable nervous sympathy. Trying to regain my calm, I said, foolishly, "Come, Caillou, you shall come back next year; Kiki's mother will have some more little Kiki's, and you shall have one of your own."

Caillou threw me a heart-broken, heart-breaking glance, which shamed me, and fled, saying, "But it won't be that one! That is the one I love."

The next day he was still sad, absorbed in his grief, but hugging, nevertheless, a sad hope.

"I've been to talk to *him*," said he. "I've told him lots of things. I'm going to write to him, and he is going to write to me; they promised me he should. We shall tell each other all our secrets."

Kiki is only a dog, but, you see, Caillou has known love through him, the whole of love. When he grows older, he will only go through the same feelings again. He has

felt the anxious and delicious joy of trying to please and to fascinate, the horror of being left, and the firm conviction that there is only one being in the world he can love, and that one lost to him for ever. And then he has nourished delusive hopes, the only thing left to an unhappy love—all this for a dog! Could he have cared to such an extent for a little girl, or even a little boy? I do not know, but one thing is probable, that, even at this pure age, the instinct of possession is a part of love. And, no doubt, Caillou thinks that only an animal could wholly belong to him. . . .

When I finished writing these lines I showed them to Caillou's mother. Authors are all alike! I imagined that this mother would be very proud when she saw the person and actions of her son immortalised in my writings, so I went to see her. I went because I like her immensely, but also in search of compliments. She did *not* compliment me. When one person expects another to talk about one particular subject, and this subject is not broached, an em-

barrassing silence ensues. And so it was! The angel flew by overhead! Then Caillou's mother took pity on me, "So you want to talk about it," said she. "Well, no, dear friend, you are not quite correct. All men are presumptuous, but what can be said of those who write!

"By dint of talking about Caillou, arranging his words, and drawing from them your own conclusions; by dint of devoting yourself to the necessary but dangerous task which is yours, and which consists in making nature over again; in making a complete human being out of the scattered fragments you have discovered; by dint of all this you imagine that it is you who are the creator of my son."

"No, alas!" I answered. "I am well aware of the contrary."

She brushed aside this piece of impudence with a gesture of the hand, and went on, "The most serious mistake you have made is to believe that Caillou shows you his soul, and that you know its innermost recesses. It is a very great mistake. The real truth is, *he* has passed judgment on *you*, not pur-

posely, but unconsciously. He has made for himself a picture of you, which is, no doubt, less real than the one you have drawn of him, but it is enough for him, and he never speaks to you but of things which he believes are of interest to you. He is like the savages; he tries hard to support your opinion; he copies you, not out of flattery, but out of pure instinct, that he may widen his domain, and make his world bigger. And as he has felt (you mustn't mind my saying so) that you are not the sort of man to ever experience a great passion, he has hidden that side of himself from you, and it is just that side that you have been attempting to discuss. Now see how inconsistent you are! You begin by saying that Caillou doesn't love little girls, which is quite true, but that for me he has a very special affection which contains certain aspects of passion. Then all of a sudden you forget all that, and make up your mind that his first passion of love was for a dog. You are quite wrong. When he first fell in love he was four years old, and the object of his passion was a big girl, four times his age."

Caillou's mother always has needlework in her hands. Now her fingers went on sewing while she talked to me, and it seemed as if the monotony of the work gave strength to her thoughts, and that as she made the stitches she arranged the words. I looked at her small face, and fair hair, and at the expression of quiet courage which she always wears, and said to myself, "What a tremendous lot of things she knows, and how simply she says them."

She went on, "The girl was an Austrian, whom we met a year ago, in a tiny little place in the Tyrol, where we were spending our holidays. I couldn't tell you what her real name was; it isn't out of discretion that I keep quiet on that score, because Caillou's loves are not yet of great importance. But we had no sooner learned her name than we forgot it, and from the first day we called her 'La Chèvre.' Not that she reminded us of that thin and bearded animal! On the contrary, never have I seen anything so round and pink and soft as her perfect skin and the pretty body where the child had blossomed into the woman. But her

step was so sure, so bold and light on the stones and rocks ; she owned so frankly to a love for steep and dangerous places, and to the patient courage of mountain animals, that the name we gave her always stuck in my memory. I think that Caillou loved her for these very reasons. In the first place, because it was what we admired in her, for her beauty always became most noticeable when she was walking or springing from rock to rock, and children are always strongly influenced by our judgments. There was another reason, however. The actions of big people always strike children much more than their outward appearance. When I discovered the deep feeling which La Chèvre inspired in Caillou, I said to him, ' You think she's pretty, don't you ? '

" He looked at me, astonished. ' When she jumps on a rock,' he remarked, ' it looks easy, and it isn't easy.' But he thought over my question, and announced : ' She's got two plaits down her back ! They are long, ever so long, and fair, and very beautiful ! '

" I am telling you this to flatter one of

your theories which does happen to be correct, that children's attention is more attracted by clothes than by form or feature. And hair, of course, almost belongs to one's clothes ; it hardly seems a part of the body. But I must tell you how I first discovered that Caillou loved La Chèvre.

" One day, at table, I saw him getting red. ' What is the matter, Caillou ? ' said I. He didn't answer ; he persisted in not answering. Caillou had a secret, a real secret, a thing he did not know how to say, or one which he would not say, because, if he let it out, it would make the feeling so impossible to control that he would perhaps do something silly, for which he would afterwards be sorry. I followed the direction of his eyes ; he was looking at La Chèvre, who had just come in. We were actually obliged to alter his place at table, so that he should not sit facing her ! Otherwise, he would not eat a thing !

" The people there soon found out Caillou's secret, and as women are full of coquetry, and of a maternal feeling as well, those who were there were touched by it, and by a little jealousy too. They would put their arms

round Caillou, and try to make a conquest in their turn. He simply didn't understand, and as it seemed to worry him, they would say, just a tiny bit vexed, ' Now, we'll take you to your big friend.' Then La Chèvre, much flattered, would kiss and caress him, but Caillou, who chatters so easily to you, was just like a little block of wood with her. One day he told me why : ' Everybody looks at me when I'm with her, and they listen too. However can I say anything to her ! ' However, he followed her about like a little slave when I allowed him to do so, and then talked to me about her.

" One day he gathered a bunch of flowers for La Chèvre. I am inclined to think that children do not pick flowers in the same way as we do. It is because they select each flower for its own particular beauty, without thinking of the whole, which often looks wild and incoherent, and is always tiny, like themselves. When Caillou had arranged his bunch to his liking, he came and sat on my lap. He has at least two ways of coming to sit on my lap, you know ; sometimes, when he is very happy, he gives a big jump on to my knee, and at

other times he slips on in a sort of humble and coaxing way, as though he were in adoration before some shrine. This particular time he chose the latter way, and he whispered, ' It's for La Chèvre, but I want you to give it to her ; I don't like to.' "

I interrupted Caillou's mother here : " Yes," I said, " that looks to me like true love. So much bashfulness is the proof of it. But how did it end ? "

" La Chèvre went away, and we thought that Caillou would be very miserable, but the day she went she gave him a bouquet—and such a pretty one ! One could see she was still enough of a child to remember all about her childhood, and enough of a woman to understand how to group harmonies together. It was made up of little sprays of wild strawberry, where the flowers mingled with the red berries of the ripe fruit. La Chèvre had picked them in the mountains, and Caillou was so pleased, so happy, that he kept the strawberries a whole hour before he ate them ! But he did eat them, one by one."

" And wasn't he sad after she had gone ? "

"No, he was filled with joy; she had given him something; it was all he expected from so great a person. And, speaking of that, I think there was a little truth in what you said the other day. When Caillou loved the dog he wanted all of him, but this big girl had made him happy with a mere nothing."

"Ah!" said I, "how many men are the same as Caillou!"

"Now, don't get melancholy," said she. "Why are you always thinking of yourself? It warps your judgment."

CHAPTER III

IN THE COUNTRY

I HAVE made further discoveries. The greatest pleasure you can give Caillou is to say to him words whose meaning he does not know. He has never seen a lion, nor a serpent, nor an axe, but as soon as you have pronounced these strange, new, interesting words before him, he pricks up his ears and questions, waiting silent for the answer. If he can, he makes you show him a picture, illustrating the word, a miserable apology for a picture which, more often than not, spoils and deforms the object it is intended to illustrate. The next day Caillou does not take any notice of any one: he has made an axe with a wooden spade, a serpent with string, and a lion with a cardboard dog, or a shapeless stone. And then, with these monsters and this weapon, more adventures happen to him than would

fill the life of a hunter in prehistoric times.

To tell the truth I have often thought he must remember things. I have believed in the transmigration of souls, in ancestral memories resurrected in the folds of his little brain ; but then I notice it is the same if I talk about aeroplanes, or of anything else whatsoever. The fact is, his picture-seeing and picture-forming faculty is still quite new, and works mechanically. As soon as any one tells him a new word, he works hard to draw from it all it contains, and no exterior reality can then intervene, or jar upon him. Probably, the world is twofold for him : there is the one which he makes up, which is the only important one ; and the one he has before his eyes, and which should only serve really to procure him the materials for those poems of his which are the joy and the true food of his thought.

Once I tried to get him to tell them at home what there was in the Tuilleries Gardens, from which he had just come. He answered, " Sand and water."

"But there are other things. Come, Caillou!"

He made a great effort to think.

"Oh, yes! Dogs and little boys, and ships."

He mentioned ships, because of those he saw sailed on the Tuilleries pond. No doubt to his eyes they were very big and real, because their size was in proportion to his own. As for trees and flowers, he only conceived of their existence when I spoke of them to him. Moreover, I am inclined to think he had no idea of those that were really there, but saw others recreated according to his fancy. He decidedly lives in a world of his own; it belongs to him; and when the two worlds, the real one and his own, dawn upon him at the same time, tiresome conflicts may be the result, shocks which disconcert and upset him. . . .

Caillou is staying in the country with his uncle now, because it is the holidays. He was very excited about the journey, and all the new things he saw, which he took in, more or less, readjusting them to his fancy.

The garden is smaller than the Tuilleries, but that makes no difference to him, because he only realises the things that immediately surround him, and which he needs for his games, which are always purely imaginative.

At the bottom of the garden there is a river, or rather stream, but Caillou is not quite positive that it is really there, because it is separated from him by a fence, near which he has been forbidden to go. His little soul is malleable and obedient, and if he cannot touch things, and play with them, he ends by ignoring them—they vanish of themselves; or, rather, they will only exist by translation on the day he makes a river with water poured on the gravel from a watering-can.

The ducks and hens in the poultry yard interest him, but only for quite a short time. They will not do what he wishes, and so they do not come into his domain, which, being imaginary, is immense. When he wants hens, he will make them for himself; to him the real ones are unreal.

For the time being he is thinking of other things. He has become the chief of a large

army, and is thinking of war! Who can have spoken to him of war, and of subsequent victory? Not of defeat, for children never think of that—all their "make-ups" are optimistic. Who has told him of enemies that you hate and destroy? No one in his family, I am quite sure, and he can't read yet, but sometimes he has seen sabres and guns, flags and bands, passing by. Another time, on the front page of an illustrated paper, there was a picture of two knights fighting. No doubt, also, he has talked to the only human beings he considers really worthy of his confidence, those of his own age, of course, and one of them "knew things."

So now Caillou loves war. And that is why he is in command of an innumerable army to-day, in the garden, near the river that bounds it. He has made a sword with a branch. Empty, gaping flower-pots, upset all over the place, are so many cannon to him, and he is astride a horse more beautiful, bigger, and more fiery than all those on earth. As for his soldiers, they are no more visible than the horse, but they are there,

oh, they are there! and they do all he wishes. They are invincible, and the enemy is slain!

He is slain, or in flight! The murderous enthusiasm of Caillou exalts and uplifts him. He clamours that he is killing, and he feels that he is! He prances round in his triumph!

Suddenly, when his transports are at their height, a hen comes out of the hen-house, and walks towards him. She comes along with the fantastic air that hens have, apparently walking nowhere in particular. She walks forward, without appearing to be doing anything. She walks forward, always seeming to gaze, with her alarming little black eyes, at Caillou's bare, brown legs.

And Caillou the general, Caillou the war-chief, Caillou the victor, throws down his sword, and shrieks, "There's a hen coming! Let's run away!"

Thus, the poet comes into contact with the outside world! The experience is a painful one!

On the other side of the stream, which is separated by a fence from Caillou's approach, the ground slopes gently up. Sandy paths surround the old house, and make a circle around the lawn. Further on, there is an avenue of lime trees, and then, trees that grow here and there, just like a real wood. And it is a real wood! Behind the hedge that closes the garden in the forest spreads further. She has been robbed of this tiny scrap of wilderness. At night, when there is a high wind, you can hear her moaning at intervals, a moaning that is made by all her branches and all her trees; and sometimes, as I fall asleep, I think, if I could only float above her in one of those beautiful calm dream flights, I should see all this verdure rippling like the waves of a sea.

As soon as the sun sets her power increases. You can almost imagine that she is moving, advancing. Her holy shade overcomes the work of men's hands; she alone exists! You feel that she is breathing in the night, with a breath unspeakably young and fresh, that stirs the blood.

The first night we have dinner in this house,

some one says, "Where is Jupiter? Has the cook forgotten to bring him?"

Jupiter is a cat, who, in Paris, does not deign to move from the drawing-room or the dining-room. Day and night he dozes on the cushions of the chairs, and only rouses himself to walk round the table at meal-times, and ask for his food; then, under the shadow of the table-cloth, you see the green phosphorescence of his eyes, and if he gets impatient, if he thinks he is not attended to quickly enough, you hear the scratching of his claws on the silken skirts—that is all!

Generally, he is supremely blasé and indifferent, disdainful even of dainty bits of chicken, and only gets excited, and then in a very mild degree, when the smell of fish reaches his nostrils. It seems as though, like a rich man, he despises life, and finds it lacking in interest.

Forgotten Jupiter! I should think not indeed!

But he is not to be found; he has deserted the house. Only the next morning is he discovered, sitting in front of the closed door, with fierce eyes, and something more

supple, more sinuous, more *alive*, in his whole body. He has been roaming the forest the whole night!

Even by day he will not stay in the house. He hides in the shrubberies, and under the flowers, and when an innocent little bird comes along he darts on it, twists its neck, and tears out its feathers with teeth and claws. Then he devours this palpitating prey, or, if he is not hungry, he goes and hides it in one of the holes where he has his den.

"Ah, Jupiter!" say I, "you are not a tame little cat any longer! You have turned into a wild beast again!"

There is a little jealousy in my speech—the jealousy of a long-civilised human being, who would be only too glad to find again, like Jupiter, the strength of old instincts, lost for ever. Caillou, who overhears me, understands only too well, so he begins to play at Man struggling with Nature. They have been imprudent enough to give him a tent, and a little air-gun, with rubber shot, and all day long he goes in and out of the tent with his gun in his hand.

" I'm not a tame little boy, either," he observes.

" What are you, then ? "

He thinks a moment, and answers, " An explorer ! "

In his new rôle as explorer he shoots at the little birds, but he hurts them far less than Jupiter. Then, for the sake of these little birds, I suggest to him that Jupiter is a tiger ; so he kills the tiger ! He kills him several times a day, until Jupiter, bored to death, goes the other side of the hedge, for he who is really hunting has no intention of being uselessly disturbed.

Caillou is disappointed and dispirited for a moment, but finally lies down full length on the grass, and I understand, oh ! I understand all that he is seeing ! Everything becomes enormous when you lie flat on the ground. Ants look like negroes carrying loads in the virgin forests, the centipedes are hideous serpents, the woodlice hippopotami, the crickets tall giraffes ! Caillou can make up all sorts of stories, all sorts of scenes, all sorts of dramas.

When he is called in to dinner he comes

quite obediently. He lets his face and hands be washed, sits in his high chair, and has his napkin tied around his neck without saying a word. What admits of this perfect obedience is the fact that, as is always the case, it is only his body which is present, his spirit is elsewhere, perpetually free.

Moreover, no sooner is dessert upon the table than he quietly slips from his high chair, and disappears. We are all talking, and it is only when I have nearly finished my cigar that I think aloud. "Hullo! where's Caillou?"

And every one says, "Where's Caillou!" No one has seen him. Our eyes seek him all along the darkened stretch of garden, but do not find him, and our calls remain unanswered. Then we send his nurse to look for him. She returns, wearing the mystified air of a creature whose authority has been slighted for no apparent reason.

"Master Jacques is lying down by the hedge!" says she. "He has his gun, and all he would say was to tell me not to make a noise."

And it is more than nine o'clock! Caillou

ought to be in bed. It is too bad. . . . Then, to lie on the wet grass when the air is so cold—abominable! He will certainly be scolded, and he will certainly cry! I foresee painful scenes, and to avoid them I go off, in my turn, to use persuasion.

I find him exactly where his nurse said, lying flat on his stomach, near the hedge, by a hole . . . a tiny little hole . . . Jupiter's right-of-way, no doubt. The trees over his head wave their branches in a very alarming fashion; the forest is murmuring; and it is dark, very dark! He really must be brave to stay there.

"Sh!" says Caillou, as I approach.

His face, which I cannot see, must, I am sure, be full of importance. I enter into the spirit of the game, and ask in a whisper, "What is the matter?"

"Sh! I'm stalking a crocodile!"

"A crocodile? But crocodiles are ever so big! Supposing he eats you up!"

This suggestion appears perfectly absurd to Caillou. All the fictitious adventure games he plays have happy endings. Danger, death, and fear are completely absent from

them, and this remark of mine only increases his desire for action.

"Supposing he eats me! Why, I've got my bullets!"

I try to bring him back to reality, and suggest cruelly; "Yes, but you've only got indiarubber ones. Don't you see that you can't kill crocodiles with those? It's silly!"

"Well, then, I'll stun him with the butt-end of my gun!"

"The gun is too small, Caillou, and you are too little."

"It doesn't matter," he says, "it doesn't matter, there is no danger really!"

"How do you know? If I were in your place I should be frightened, I should indeed! So what about you?"

Then Caillou's voice turns a shade sulky in the darkness. He is being forced to his last retrenchments. And he asserts, "There's not any danger, because—because—there's not any crocodile really. I only say there is, but it isn't really true."

So he owns up at last! I have the confession that never for a moment has he

lost sight of the fact that he is making all this up. He prefers to confess to it rather than give up his game. But it has not mended matters! I put my hand on his shoulders, and feel him shivering. I must take him away skilfully. From the extent of my experience, and to show him there is an error in the plot of his drama, I announce, "Never mind, any way! People don't shoot crocodiles with indiarubber shot, you know; I know, because I've killed them, you see. To-morrow, I'll give you some proper bullets."

"Oh, all right, then," says Caillou, and he lets me take him away to the house quite peacefully. All he can think of now is the new kind of shot, and he is thinking of that because he has never yet seen it.

CHAPTER IV

HIS MODESTY

FOR a very long time, that is to say during the whole of their young lives, Caillou and Tili have shared the same bedroom. This room, which is not a very big one, looks out on the gardens of a private house, and that is all you can hope for when you are not rich, and want fresh air and sunshine for your children. You must manage as best you can, and in any case it is a very good thing that there should be people in the towns rich enough to have gardens. If it were not for them we should only have blank walls to look at, without so much as a blade of grass.

I don't know whether it is because people are fond of fine-sounding names, or merely because it is the fashion, that this room is generally called the nursery. In my childhood it was called the children's room, and that

seems to me more homely and more musical. The room of which I write has nothing in its arrangements which could possibly indicate its use. Here are none of those clean, smooth tiles, none of those useful contrivances for hot and cold water which are the pride of mothers, and which permit them at the same time to economise the moments consecrated to maternal cares. Only Caillou's mother has had the walls covered with a blue and white stripped paper, perhaps because these colours have a mystical meaning for her, perhaps because they awaken kind and tender thoughts.

The dressing-table, which does not rejoice in the latest improvements, is on the right, near the fireplace, and the two little beds are in corners, opposite each other. They are little iron bedsteads, uncurtained, but painted blue and white like the walls also. Electricity has invaded this old house too, and the opalescence of the crystal globes gives it a look of calm and candid purity.

When he is being dressed for dinner, Caillou delights in turning the switch on and off, and so creating light and darkness,

but when bedtime comes he is always so tired that he is sound asleep in no time. Sometimes, even, he falls asleep standing up, while he is being undressed, first tumbling to right and then to left, and staggering about like a very tipsy little man, and like tipsy men in general, when the next day comes, he does not at all remember being put to bed, or that he has even spoken to them just to wail out his utter misery.

But no matter whether Caillou be asleep or awake, as soon as Tili has her nightgown on, a long nightgown just like Caillou's, she comes over to kiss him good-night. Her real name is Lucile, but when she was quite little, and could not speak plainly, she called it Lutile, so they called her Tile for short, and then Tili because it was prettier. She is a year and a half older than her brother, so, according to the children's manner and reasoning, she ought to be his superior, and to receive homage from him. But it is *she* who comes to *him*, she bends over him, she thinks of this good-bye before sinking into the forgetfulness of the night's long slumber. Perhaps she does it because

she is a coquette, and the act is a very pretty one. Or perhaps, and is this not the same thing exactly, with just a hint of submission added thereto perhaps, she is already a woman. If that be the case, she only manifests it by loving caresses and coaxing ways. Unlike Caillou, moreover, she is cleanly and dainty. She looks delightedly at the pretty things she is going to wear, and rejoices in them, but . . . she doesn't realise that she possesses a body! And in consequence, she, who is nearly eight years old, does not know the meaning of the word modesty. That is why the two children have to be separated, because Caillou is not at all the same, and is perpetually filled with a certain anxiety and curiosity.

They are bathed every morning in the big round tub, Tili first, because she is older, and has lessons early. But although Caillou tumbles into bed every night as though he were half dead with fatigue, it is no good saying to him in the morning, "Come, Caillou, go to sleep again!" He is like a bird who sees the good daylight; he must twitter and look about and listen.

That is why Caillou sleeps alone now in the blue and white room. Tili's bed has been put in a dressing-room, and they have said to her brother, " You see you are a big man now, because you sleep by yourself."

Caillou flings up his head with pride, and his mother goes on : " And because you are big, you know, you must never go into Tili's room without knocking. Big boys never do that."

I have told you already that Caillou believes all that he is told, and this time a secret feeling, deep, if a little vague, has made him accept this piece of advice with a submission that has a tinge of embarrassment in it.

Now it is Tili's turn.

They say, " You are a big girl now, Tili ; you are eight ! You must not run all over the place in your nightdress. It isn't proper ! " (convenable).

The word " proper " makes a deep impression on Tili. They always use it before her when speaking of dress ; it is a woman's word, and fills her with a sort of serious pleasure.

The next day Caillou, who is anxious to see his sister's room, comes to the door and knocks as he has been told to do. Tili is no less obedient. She calls out: "Wait a minute, Caillou! I've got my nightgown on!"

And she has it off in a trice! The only fact she retains of all that has been said to her is that her nightgown "isn't proper." She is absolutely and entirely innocent.

There she stands in the open doorway, stark naked, and as slender as a willow wand with her thin arms and legs, and she looks straight at Caillou with the most beautiful unconsciousness.

And Caillou? Had he been thirty, he could not have behaved better. He turns aside, as though he had noticed nothing unusual, while Tili has her dressing-gown put on, but he is deep in thought. You would not catch him showing himself to people with such indifference! With strangers, and especially men (probably because he has always been looked after by women), his modesty has something almost savage in it. Perhaps he is sometimes

embarrassed by the beginning of a man's pride in himself.

That's only a vague kind of impression on my part. I have so little experience, so little subtlety when the soul of a child is concerned. And I think that is very likely the reason why I love children so much. With them I feel like an explorer in a country virgin, and as yet unspoilt, where no dangers await me, and where I shall find simple noble scenery and delicious spots of shade, from which I can gaze upon many things, far away in the sun-lit distance. . . .

Tili has sat down with a bang in the middle of the Tuileries Gardens. She is not brave like Caillou, and she looks upon these incidents as personal outrages vented upon her by some mysterious power.

But to-day she yells as she has never yelled before, with all her might . . . horribly! It isn't that she is hurt, she is frightened, dreadfully frightened!

"Come, Tili," says her mother, "you *are* a silly. You've fallen down lots of times before!"

She gently strokes under the short dress behind the little firm round portion of Tili's anatomy.

"Yes," says Tili, still in tears, "but it's not the same as other times! I've just felt, and now there are *two*!"

She has never before noticed that there are two, and the sudden revelation has terrified her!

Caillou, with his hands in the pockets of his short breeches, assists at this scene of despair, and manifests great contempt!

"Girl's don't know anything!"

I feel completely lost. The traditional beliefs I have hitherto shared as to the nature of little men and little women seem to be quite false. Until then I had cherished the idea that modesty is an inborn trait in girls, and is pretty nearly non-existent in boys; also that it is an acquired feeling, and was originally wanting in both sexes. I have since discovered that the question is much more complicated, so complicated that it makes my brain reel. Caillou has a fairly intimate knowledge of his little body, a sort of brooding concern for it. Tili has no

hesitation whatever in revealing hers to the public gaze, and yet has just proved to us that she knows absolutely nothing about it. This seems really contradictory and disconcerting.

Their mother says to me : " They are just like little boys and girls should be, and if they were in any way different I should be anxious. Caillou is already a man ; he is proud of his supple young limbs, he feels his muscles hardening and is happy. He knows he can lift this, and tries to lift that. He dreams of having enemies and conquering them. He has a triumphant knowledge of the poise of his limbs, and of their growing strength. He thinks but little as yet, but that little is of his body, for all his future as a man is contained there."

" It is much the same for Tili," say I smiling.

" You are making the same mistake that most men make," says she, " and it is a gross one. As soon as we can speak, a sure instinct tells us we were made to please ; and dresses, hats and outward appearance have much to do with that. Thus the

attention of small girls is distracted by these very means from the contemplation of the shape of their body. They don't give it a thought."

"Ah! but they will later."

"They will, when suffering reveals it to them. Didn't you know that? Tili proved it to you when she fell down just now, and later on, my friend, it is suffering that will teach Tili that she has a sex."

She ponders awhile, and then she says almost in a whisper, but with a gloriously triumphant look, "And then perhaps Caillou's bashfulness arises partly from the fact that I don't look at him as I do at his sister. I am a woman, and I'm proud, overcome with wonder, and blessed in having borne him!"

I keep silence for a time.

"Even had I been able to *think* them," I confess at last, "I could never have *said* these things as you have. I should never have dared. Now it all seems so simple and pure and beautiful."

"The reason for that," says she, "is that each of us two, old as we are, has preserved

the modesty of sex, which is that of children. That is what we mean by living a pure life."

At that moment I loved and admired her so much, that it seemed a pity. . . .

CHAPTER V

CAILLOU'S FRIENDS

CAILLOU has a great many little friends, not girls, for you know what he thinks of them, but amongst the crowd of little boys he knows, there is one much older than himself, whom he follows like a shadow when he has the chance. Caillou's parents, however, do not look favourably upon this friendship, for Boulot has a bad reputation—I mean, of course, the reputation of being very naughty. That isn't a very serious fault, but it is too much of a good thing sometimes. When Caillou meets Boulot anywhere, he comes home full of extraordinary excitement, "Boulot says this; Boulot does that." Caillou puts his hands in his pockets just like Boulot, and talks in the same way. You see Boulot is almost a "big" boy and, what is more, it cannot be gainsaid that, in spite of all, when

people discuss him they are more inclined to laugh at his naughtinesses than to be angry.

Some time ago, when the separation of Church and State took place, at the time of the Inventories, Boulot was the hero of a celebrated drama. Having been introduced to him by Caillou one day, I had the honour of hearing the story from his own lips.

"When I think it over," he said to me, "all that happened was entirely father's fault. If he hadn't always been reading the papers to us, we shouldn't ever have thought of the game, but grown-ups haven't the smallest idea of justice. They've been sulking at us since it happened—more than a month ago now; we've never been to the circus; André had his pocket-money stopped; Guitte didn't get the new comb that was promised her; and Bobosse was made to wear his pinafore inside out on his back. But even now Bobosse says he doesn't care a hang about his pinafore, and that we had a jolly good time anyway, and I should rather think we did!

"Now I'll tell you how it began, so that you can see for yourself that all that followed

was perfectly natural. When there were all those shindies at St Clotilde and the Madeleine and the Gros Caillou, father used to say every evening, 'Now, children, we're going to have some devotional reading.' And his devotional readings were splendid—about how they sent for the priests and said to them, 'You just shut up, please, or you'll be punished; you're only talking rot!' I call that a fine way of doing things, and I only hope Abbé Vacarme, who teaches me catechism, got what for: and about how all the doors had to be closed with iron-wire, and the fire brigade came with the engines, and heroic citizens hit them over the head with brass candlesticks, and somebody was in such a hurry to give Monsieur le Préfet a chair that it fell on his head, and made a great hole in it. And how they made barricades in the churches as high as houses, and broke all the panes of glass. Bobosse's eyes shone with enthusiasm when he heard of the broken glass!

"One Tuesday, after lunch, the pater and mater went out, as they always do, and the little de Lupercales came to spend the

afternoon: then we made up the game. I can tell you everything; I know all about it, for I was the Registrar, the head of the police, and the fire brigade.

"We *were* having a time when the pater and mater came in. They saw at once that there was something different in the hall! I should jolly well think so! Nothing was left in it—not the wood chest, nor the Normandy press, nor 'Mignon weeping for her home' on her pedestal. They nearly had a fit! They went to the schoolroom door and opened it—we couldn't lock it; you see a fortnight ago André threw the key into the bowl of goldfish that belongs to the old lady on the first floor—and then they saw Mignon mounting guard on a pile of chairs. All the chairs in the flat were there, and the arm-chairs too! We put them to barricade the doors opening on to the hall and the glass doors on the verandah. There were three tables with their legs in the air, and a Louis XVI. washstand—I believe we damaged the washstand—and Guitte was standing on the top of it, singing the Parce Domine! It was grand! Then the pater

called out, 'What does all this mean?' When I'm grown up, I'm certain I'll take things in quicker! We all answered, 'Can't you see? We're playing inventories.'

"Guitte was still singing the Parce Domine, and André was crossing bayonets with a wolf's head. It was most impressive! I was outside on the verandah, because I was the Registrar, the head of the police, and the fire brigade. I'll tell you in a minute how I did the fire brigade! That was the best of all! I yelled, 'Open, in the name of the law!' Guitte, from the top of the washstand said, 'Zut!!' Then I served a summons on the three of them, beating the drum on the big tub out of the dressing-room. It made a splendid row. I said, 'Let all good citizens withdraw!' Then Bobosse chucked a candlestick at me; he threw it through the glass doors, and broke them all to bits! That was all arranged beforehand, by the way.

"I thought it time to announce the arrival of the fire brigade, for, as I told you, I was the fire brigade, and I had my engines all ready! You can't guess what they were!

All mother's scent sprays and vaporizers, that I'd sneaked out of her dressing-room, and they *did* work well. Bobosse didn't turn a hair when I squirted him, but Guitte began to yell like a foghorn. Girls haven't an atom of pluck in times of danger. As for the little de Lupercales, they were howling!

"Then father knocked over the three piles of chairs, jumped over the washstand —Mignon was still weeping for her home, but with her nose on the ground—and I think he boxed Bobosse's ears, but Bobosse bore this ill-treatment with great courage.

"Guitte hid behind the little de Lupercales, who hadn't anything to be afraid of, as they didn't belong to the family. Then came my turn!!

"The top of the Louis XVI. washstand was broken as I told you just now; there were a few chair-legs missing; and as for the floor! I must say it looked like a bathroom — that was because of my spray-engines. When the pater and mater had taken note of the extent of the damage, they began to think about who was responsible.

Father said, 'Where is Miss Gubbins?' Miss Gubbins is the governess, you know. Now Bobosse has the sort of face that can't keep a secret anyhow; that is why he tried to hide it behind his handkerchief. Besides, everybody knows he can't bear Miss Gubbins, and is always fighting with her. One day, when she was teaching him Bible history, she said, 'Now, Bobosse, what animals did Noah take into the ark?' he said, 'He-rats, she-rats, fleas and Mademoiselles!' A great tragedy was the result of that, and so father and mother questioned him first now. At last he said, 'Miss Gubbins! Miss Gubbins! We've locked her up in her room'; and as they showed great indignation, he went on with much simplicity, 'We *had* to lock her up; she was playing the curé!'"

I'd forgotten to tell you that Boulot's father is a senator, and Boulot's philosophy, as you will already have observed, is faintly tinged with Anarchism, like that of a great many French people of to-day. I noticed this more than ever one day in the Luxem-

bourg Gardens. "Come on," said Boulot, running down the steps which lead from the chestnut avenue to the big pond, "do hurry up, Miss Gubbins! It's only four o'clock, and the pater said he won't be leaving the House until half-past five. He says they aren't exactly killing themselves with work at the House, but he's got to wait to see some chap (type). He'll fetch us after." Miss Gubbins' hands were full. In one she carried a little bag, being obliged, though only a simple governess, to make a sacrifice to fashion, and go without pockets. In the other hand was the case which contained Boulot's school books. Boulot, who is twelve, likes this case to be called a portfolio, but his mother persists in calling it a satchel. She has remained true to the old-fashioned speech of Verville, where her husband was professor before becoming a member of Parliament. That is one reason why Boulot thinks she is not up-to-date—he'll find others later!

Miss Gubbins, resigned to her fate, subsided on to a stone bench facing the sunset and in the shade, but Boulot said with in-

genuous firmness, "Have a chair, Miss Gubbins. You look like I don't know what on a bench. A chair only costs a penny, and you'll look like—like a widow!"

Miss Gubbins sighed. She wasn't a widow, nor *quite* an old maid. She sighed, and watched very young men passing by with *fairly* young women. She sighed, and sat on the chair Boulot brought her, for he has already learnt to be polite to ladies, and she gazed at him with very humble, chaste and adoring eyes. He was a boy! She couldn't understand him, but she loved him very much. You must not think her foolish; not to understand and to love very much is at the bottom of all true love.

Said she, "Whom are you waiting for?"

"Cecil Rhodes," answered Boulot briefly.

"Don't be silly, my boy," said Miss Gubbins, surprised for a moment into her own English language by the shock this announcement gave her, "don't talk nonsense. Cecil Rhodes is dead!"

"Not the real Cecil Rhodes of course," said Boulot. "Can't talk to you if I've always got to explain everything. It's an-

other chap from our school (*boîte*). They call him that because he's a multi-millionaire, not him, but his parents, and he is coming here to try a submarine his pater's given him. It's a beauty (*épatant*) worked by electricity, just like a real one, and it costs . . . I don't know how much ; he told me, but he only reckons in louis."

He added with a satisfied air, " Jolly fine fleet out to-day ! "

On the dull lead-coloured water of the round pond, fifteen or twenty boats were sailing ; boats of all sizes, or rather reductions of every possible size, and of every type of marine architecture. A tiny fishing-boat with just two scarlet three-cornered sails seemed to be playing at catching microscopical fishes on a Lilliputian sea. A handsome yacht, with three jibs, two square sails and studding sails, was sailing along, heeling over to the wind ; then righting herself at the moment of tacking, seemed to rival the swan as she passed him by. A kind of trawler showed her blue keel, and an old-time frigate sailed majestically past, with her lofty mast, her mizzen, fore-mast, top-

mast and shrouds, with her thousand ropes and huge spread of sails full of wind, her high poop, her three rows of portholes, and the golden mermaid at her bows, a true queen of the waters. Other vessels touched against each other, crossed and recrossed, and a poor looking boy, pale and miserable, dressed in torn breeches and collarless shirt (but a poet perhaps in spite of it all), dragged along the waters part of a broken wooden shovel tied to a bit of string. It was *his* boat, his very own, and his imagination no doubt pictured it manned by sailors, wandering over the billowy, boundless blue ocean, or landing at some mysterious island peopled with wild beasts and savages.

The orange trees too, the palm and mimosa trees, whose scent sweetened the air, and filled it with an odour of frangipani, mingled with the tallest foliation of the gardens, gave them a kind of vaguely exotic air, and, leaning against the pedestal of a marble statue, a negress, a "nenaine" from the island of Réunion, who was nursing a little fair baby, buttoned her red bodice over her black breast.

The big clock of the Luxembourg pointed to five o'clock. Said Boulot, " Here's Cecil Rhodes. Time he did turn up too ! " Cecil Rhodes was clad in grey trousers, an Eton jacket, and a bowler hat. He looked gentle and tired of life already, but childish enough in spite of it. A man-servant followed him, carrying the famous submarine in a box. Boulot shook hands with the former in a patronising sort of way.

" Hullo ! " said he, " it must be you who have fetched out the ' pères conscrits ' (senators), there are some of them crossing the gardens now."

Every now and then old gentlemen were to be seen walking about under the trees, walking with a somewhat decrepit slowness. Some of them would raise their heads in a melancholy fashion if a pigeon cooed above them. Perhaps they were thinking of their youth, of the Pépinière, of the Closerie des Lilas . . . perhaps their minds were a blank. . . .

" Do you know them ? " said Cecil Rhodes, enviously.

" Not all ; there are too many of them,

but I know a lot," Boulot deigned to reply. "I know all the Ministers, and sometimes they speak to me, the Ministers do! I made the Minister of Marine an ironclad all by myself the other day, and gave it to him. It was made of elder pith and mahogany and tin, all complete. He thanked me very much, and told me he would give me the medal for old sailors. He's a good sort, and a *great* friend of mine."

"Your ironclad isn't as good as my submarine," said Cecil Rhodes rather jealously. "What would your friend say if he saw my submarine!"

"Well, I didn't say he wouldn't," said Boulot, slightly ruffled, "but it isn't a bit the same; *you* didn't make your submarine yourself. Besides when I've looked at it p'raps I'll be able to make one too. Let's see!"

The servant took the submarine out of the box. It was a marvellous toy, a thing of luxury, half a yard long, with a steel hull fastened with real bolts, a periscope, a torpedo tube, and a brass propeller, with strong light blades.

The fifty odd boys who were playing round the pond came nearer.

" Does it open ? " demanded Boulot.

" Yes, you can unscrew it, and when you screw it up again it's water-tight, old man," said Cecil Rhodes importantly.

Boulot unscrewed it with a practised hand. Fifty heads, black, brown, fair, shock-headed or close shaven, surrounded his own.

" It's jolly neat," said he, " jolly neat ! A beauty ! Here's the water-ballast, the engine, the accumulators, and the battery ! It's ripping ! (*épatant*). Does it go ? "

" You wait a bit ! " said Cecil Rhodes.

After having adjusted the screws, the servant started the battery and the engine revolved ; then he put the miracle gently into the water.

Agile, clever, quick, and as though alive, off started the submarine, first on the surface of the water, then moved by a spring that only worked at regular intervals, she plunged, and disappeared as though by magic. All you could see of her now was the little mirror, the watching eye above the waters, then she came to the surface again, replunged,

turned round of her own accord, lithe and supple. The fifty urchins applauded vociferously.

" That's a clever dodge, I'm blessed if it isn't ! You know what's what, old chap ! " said Boulot.

" The big people are looking at it too," said Cecil Rhodes with great pride.

That was true enough ! A crowd of people now surrounded the pond, and were standing there, amused and delighted, a prey to the great, rare and delicious joy of again experiencing curiosity and the childish power of astonishment and admiration.

The submarine had just come up to the surface, as though to breathe. It looked like a living animal, a fish of some kind, a sole, or ray, or carp ; its periscope really did look like an eye. At that very moment the frigate came along, the fine old out-of-date frigate, with her three masts, quivering sails and winged gait. She came majestically along, pitching a little, dipping her stern into the pale water. The wind freshened, the sails filled with the strong breeze, and she heeled over.

" Oh ! Oh ! " everybody cried out ! The golden mermaid, as though alive and sentient, struck on the port side with her fish's tail the perfect piece of mechanism, which quivered under the shock, dipped her nose, turned turtle and sank ! She had absolutely vanished, nothing more was to be seen except a few bubbles, tiny bubbles, which burst immediately on the surface of the pond. Thus ended this naval drama, a short and sinister one !

" Oh ! Boulot ! Boulot ! " wailed Cecil Rhodes.

The fifty urchins, in a useless attempt at rescue, were leaning over the pond. You could see nothing but posteriors, posteriors of every colour under the sun, clothed in trousers, striped, grey, blue or pink, bare legs, and now and then a pair of ears sticking out like door handles.

" Oh ! Boulot ! Boulot ! " again lamented Cecil Rhodes. He wept bitter and endless tears. Boulot himself was feeling sad, and his kind heart was moved by the great and irreparable catastrophe.

At last he said, " Buck up, old fellow,

don't blub about it! Look here, my friend, the Minister of Marine loses no end of ships; he's always losing them, and he doesn't make a fuss about it!"

Cecil Rhodes' grief would not be appeased however, so Boulot resorted to a supreme argument.

"I say, he promised me the medal for old sailors, just because I'd made him an Ironclad, so he'll be sure to *make* you have the Legion of Honour as you've lost your ship."

Another thing that astonished many people was the way Boulot behaved when he stood as godfather to his big brother Jacques' first child.

When big brother Jacques came to ask as a favour that Boulot and his sister Guitte might be their nephew's godfather and godmother, Boulot's mother gave a shriek of dismay. "It's quite out of the question, he'll do nothing but laugh."

This remark ruffled Boulot's feelings, and he declared that, as he was nearly fourteen, he knew all about christenings, and what serious matters they were. When the pre-

parations were being made he was as good as gold. He asked to give something towards the present which his parents were buying for him to present as godfather to his "commère," and produced three francs, the third of his worldly wealth.

The great day has arrived at last. Guitte is all in white with a white bouquet, white gloves, shoes and stockings, and a big shady hat, underneath which is her little pink and white face. Boulot is dressed in his best; white trousers and waistcoat, a short coat and high hat. It's simply hideous, but awe-inspiring! They get into the motor to call for the rest of the cortège, and Boulot's mother keeps on saying, "Don't laugh, Boulot, please! You won't, will you?"

This reiteration seems to offend him. Big brother Jacques comes along with the monthly nurse, the baby's nurse and the candidate for baptism. They start off for the church, and the instructions come thick and fast.

"Here's the bonbon box: that's for the curé; there are twenty francs in it. You must give twenty francs to each of the nurses,

and you mustn't laugh, Boulot, really! Put it all in your pocket; not the one you keep your handkerchief in, the other. Five francs to the sacristan. You will be good, Boulot, I implore you!"

Grown-up people have such perverted minds. They do really think he will suddenly burst out laughing; they expect him to. The grandfather, the grandmother, brother Jacques himself, the monthly nurse and the baby's nurse are all in a kind of amused anguish of expectation. Standing in a ring round the font they have to bite their lips to repress their smiles, because Boulot is standing with a long lighted wax taper in his hand. He disconcerts them, however; he is impassive and quite serious. Brother Jacques' son and heir is undressed, salt put in his mouth, and water on his head, and of course he yells, but Boulot doesn't turn a hair.

He is asked if he believes in God, and he answers "I believe in God," with the greatest accuracy. On being invited to renounce Satan and all his pomps and evil works, he answers "I renounce them." Behind his

back the company explode. He turns round and contemplates them with a severe eye. Truly he is magnificent!

After the ceremony at the font he and Guitte are conducted to a side chapel to two beautiful velvet chairs, on which they kneel and listen to a sort of little homily that the Abbé reads from a book. Among other things it says that little people should never sleep with big people for fear of being overlaid. Boulot nods his head approvingly, and then the Abbé goes on in the most natural way: "And finally, it is my duty to warn you that the fact of your standing together as godfather and godmother to this child constitutes a spiritual tie of such a nature that you are henceforth prohibited from contracting marriage with one another."

At this moment a perfectly scandalous sound is heard, the whole of the christening party bursting into uncontrollable laughter. The monthly nurse, the baby's nurse, grandfather and grandmother are all roaring with laughter. But Boulot is indeed admirable. He casts a glance round the circle to call them

to order, and replies with dignity, " Monsieur l'Abbé, there are other obstacles ! This person is my sister ! "

Guitte, who is ten years old, is immensely flattered at hearing herself called " this person."

Then Boulot offers her his arm with great ease, to give her into the care of her parents. He carries the bonbon box to M. le Curé, and distributes the rest of the offerings.

Everything has gone off well, almost too well, and Boulot is still of a most deceptive coolness. Finally, at the church porch he finds his brother gazing at his heir with a certain pride, and slips a two franc piece into his hand. His brother asks with astonishment, " What in the world is this ? "

" Well, as you're the baby's father I think I ought to give you a trifle. I've given something to all the others ! "

All this is sufficient to explain why Caillou is kept as much as possible out of the way of this young man. Boulot is too modern ; he has lost all sense of respect.

Another of Caillou's friends is "the Flea."

When a Paris street is a public thoroughfare, you are sure to find people there walking along quickly, and omnibuses, motor buses, motors, and drays loaded with stone; sometimes you see huge horses, harnessed, and going along in threes in the charge of a smart-looking soldier-servant who, mounted on the left hand one, takes them along at a rattling pace. Sometimes you come across dogs too, for they do not seem to know what fear is, and often appear like the bustle and noise.

In the side streets you will find children, especially at four o'clock in the afternoon, when the schools come out. They begin to play about quite naturally there, they feel pretty safe; in the same way as in winter, when the Seine rises, the riverside wash-houses take refuge in the "dead arms" of the river.

The street I live in is one of these side streets, and even before four o'clock, when the street is quite empty, quite empty . . .

at meal times, for instance . . . anyone who loves little children (myself, or perhaps an ogre), can tell by certain sure signs that it is a place much frequented by them, just as some fields always serve as a covert for partridges.

For you will find inscriptions there. One of the handsome blocks of stone on the corner house . . . a new one by the way . . . bears this one, traced by a cunning hand in white chalk for the unimportant words, and blue for the important ones : " All girls are fools."

But further on, near the Pension Osanam, a home school for boys, the girls have attempted a revenge : " All boys are . . ."

I give you my word of honour it was not I who made those dots. The young epigraphist has stopped short, horrified at her boldness, and at what she was going to write. I never fail to look at those dots as I pass by, for they seem to me a touching proof of the instinctive modesty of the feminine sex !

I must tell you now how I came to know " the Flea." He is eight years old, and the heir (not that that is any good to him) of

one of the concièrges down the street. She is the mother of five other olive branches, all bearing a mysterious resemblance to some animal. One of the boys seems to belong to the rat family, and the girls can be placed either among the sparrow or skinned-cat tribe. "The Flea" owes his name to the exiguity of his body, the sudden and spasmodic jumps he gives, and the sort of indescribable dirty brown colour spread all over him. He has beautiful and very intelligent brown eyes, ears that stick out like trumpets, and it would be better if his hair were fair, the dust would not show so much on a light surface, but unfortunately his hair is black! When his face is clean, which does not often happen, you can see that his cheeks and nose are covered with freckles. Cattle breeders affirm that it is by this same sign that they are able to ascertain the crossing of breeds. I do not know if it be the same for human beings.

One day I was changing my place of abode, and "the Flea" saw that I had some "Savages' Weapons!" He came and asked me for a spear. I gave him a Touareg

assegai with the point carefully blunted. As this was the means of procuring him a certain standing in the Quartier, he became more friendly with me. That is the way things generally progress between the benefactor and the recipient of the benefit. He even got so bold as to ask to " run errands " for me. This became the source of considerable profit to him, for he used to receive as much as a penny for going to buy my tobacco. After a little time, however, he turned up one day with a friend. This latter belonged to the weasel tribe . . . pointed ears, pointed muzzle, short legs and interminable body !

" I'm going with my friend," announced " the Flea."

I made no remark because it was all the same to me, but " the Flea " decided that I disapproved of this arrangement, so he explained : " Because you can go so much quicker with a friend ! "

Experience proved to me, however, that this was either an illusion on his part, or a downright lie, but as I kept this opinion to myself, his enterprising spirit

increased. Coming up to me at the Micarême he deigned to say, "I'm going to throw confetti."

I assured him that I had no objection to that, but he went on with shining eyes, "It's ripping! You hide in a doorway, and when a lady or a little girl, specially a little girl passes by . . . Bang! you throw a handful in her face. And it's all pink and white and yellow and green and blue!!! It's beautiful! A kilo of confetti costs fifteen sous!"

That seemed a good deal of money to me, "Fifteen sous, Flea, fifteen sous! Have you got it?"

His eyes shone brighter, "Oh! no," said he, "I haven't got it!" He didn't say anything else, but I understood and gave him his fifteen sous, because his manner of asking for it was so sublime.

Spring came, but it was bitterly cold. "The Flea," who went on shivering stoically . . . he shivers like a wet dog, looking as though he were thinking of other things . . . "the Flea" seemed brokenhearted.

I couldn't think why at first, but he showed me the chestnut trees in the Pension Osanam; they stretch their great branches right over into the road.

"Don't you see," said he, "their leaves are frost-bitten!" And so they are! The late frosts have killed the budding leaves of all, nearly all the chestnuts in Paris. I thought that the soul of a little artist was growing in "the Flea," and all the more when he said, "And of course there won't be any flowers!"

"Well?"

"Well, there won't be any chestnuts! Whatever are we going to play with?"

I have never thought of that. How many sorrows there are that big people know nothing about. During these last few days, however, when the weather really has been abominable, serenity is once more restored to the countenance of "the Flea." As soon as the first drops of rain begin to patter on the pavement I see his little face emerge from his mother's door, like a young rabbit coming out of its hole, then, all of a sudden, in the very heaviest rain, he begins to run

with all his might to the end of the street. You must know that the gutter stream in our street is a beauty! It follows a fine slope, quite straight and fairly steep, and doesn't fall down the drain till much further on, at the other end of the street; torrents pour down there, swelling, muddy torrents, full of surf and rapids. Even I go and look at it through the window. It pleases me to see it swell, and I feel almost sad when its rushing flow decreases. "The Flea" hurriedly places on the torrent an old cork, stolen from the wine merchant's at the corner, and then he follows his boat. The cork starts off and turns over and over, bounds along, sometimes it nearly gets stuck in a blind alley between two paving stones, where the eddy makes it go round and round. "The Flea" bites his lips! Won't his ship go any further? Oh, yes! it starts off again, light and elastic, striking the steep sides of the gutter, in the middle of the stream now, sailing along the mighty deep! Quick! Quick! it tears along, but "the Flea" is quicker still, he flies to the opening of the drain, and kneels down there with both his

hands plunged in the dirty water, as though drunk with the roar of the falling stream. And all this just to fish out his cork and begin his game again! Surely wonderful stories must be forming in his mind, of wrecks and the courage of invisible sailors. He must have a hazy, though terrifying notion that all things end in the abyss, the blackness, the swallowing up . . . Terror!

Sometimes Caillou and I take our umbrella and go out to watch the game, and Caillou is consumed with envy! What joys there are in a dirty stream, and how much the children of well-to-do people miss in not knowing them, but their parents have their own reasons for withholding these delights from them. "The Flea" was always shivering, I told you . . . now he coughs!

I went to see him the other day, and made his mother undress him. Nothing is sadder to see than the body of a little sick child. I know that now. Children should have fine, fat legs, and plump hindquarters, their body should be slim but well filled-out. You could count "the Flea's" ribs, and his shoulder blades were like budding wings.

Caillou has a money box, so I said to him, " Caillou, if you and I formed a syndicate, we could send 'the Flea' to the country." Caillou has a good heart; he gave me all he had in his money box, and I added what was necessary. Then we went to see the president of the Holidays' Association, who is a very nice lady, and " the Flea " was sent to the country.

I asked them to write to me, and tell me how he was getting on; in the first place because I wanted to know if he had stopped coughing, and also what sort of impression everything had made on him . . . the real trees, the grass, the big streams, and the animals and flowers in the fields.

They wrote in answer, " Your little protégé is doing very well and is getting fat. His cough is quite gone. I don't think he has learned yet to take things in, though. At the back of the house where he is staying there is a big field of lucerne, and all the rain we have had has brought out a number of those little yellow star-shaped flowers that the farmers dread so much. 'The Flea' went as far as the lucerne field and looked at

it a long time . . . a very long time. The spectacle was a more extensive one than had hitherto been presented to his sight. Then he demanded, ' Who threw all that confetti there ? ' "

CHAPTER VI

THE CIRCUS

SOME days Caillou is loving, especially loving, without any one knowing why. He is as though obsessed with the desire to love. No woman could be happier or more clever at caressing, and at the same time being caressed, at giving a hundred kisses, with the air of saying, " I am the one who is being kissed."

That comparison satisfies me but ill; another comes into my mind which I hardly dare avow. I am thinking of those fox-terriers, so alive that they almost seem mad, in whom all the feelings are intensified, as it were; pleasure, pain and delight are diffused throughout their body, if you do but pet them; it is as though they had the nervous system of a very big dog imprisoned in their small body. And I think it is the same with children; already they hold

prisoner all the feelings they will express later in life.

People imagine that the growth of the sons and daughters of men is regular and uniform to its close, but to think thus is to have observed carelessly. For instance, our eyes and ears hardly alter from the time we are quite little, and it is the same perhaps with our capacity for love. That is complete from the beginning, and later on in life it only extends over a greater surface, and stirs feelings which have lost much of their youthful spontaneity.

Caillou was a prey to a delirium of caresses one day. He had thrown his arms round my neck, and would not let me go. I had his lips on my cheek, his legs were twined round my back and my chest. From time to time his mother said reproachfully, "Come, Caillou, don't be a nuisance."

But he took no notice, and I felt myself bathed, inundated, permeated, with the good warm life that flowed from him. I was deliciously paralysed by the clasp, so irresistible, and yet so weak, of his limbs, the very bones of which were as flexible as the

branches of a young tree. He said repeatedly, "You love me, don't you? Do you love me?"

"Yes, Caillou; you know I do."

Notwithstanding, he continued to ask the same question over and over again, and I answered the same thing. I nearly fell asleep in my chair by the fire as comfortably as though it had been he who held me in his arms. At last, however, he thought he had better complete the game, and invent something.

"If you really love me," he said, "then do something to please me!"

"Of course I will, Caillou," said I; "what can I do?"

"Ah!" he answered. "I don't know, but I should so like you to do something to please me."

He was happy, as happy as possible in the superabundance of life which he felt within him, but he had the need to "exteriorise" his happiness, to have a reason for it. And thus, he was acting like a man, retaining at the same time his childish ingenuousness.

Now what pleasure could I give Caillou? It is at moments like these that you feel the abyss that separates you from such tiny beings. You no longer have their imagination; you cannot think as they do; you don't *understand*! I felt quite humiliated.

"Well," said I (his arms clasped me tighter), "next week, I'll take you to the circus!"

I had invented this notion on the spur of the moment, and it did not seem to me much to boast of, but I simply *had* to say something. However, the promise I had just given made me very attentive to that which was to follow. How would Caillou take the news?

"Ah, yes," said he, in an almost blasé, though friendly sort of way, as if he were congratulating me on the pleasant sensation I was about to give myself. "The circus! I know!"

His mother looked up, attentive too, and seemed a bit horrified, for Caillou has never been to the circus, yet he seemed to affirm, with an air of consummate experience, the

knowledge he had of this kind of performance.

"Yes," continued Caillou, "there are ladies on horseback, with bare legs and short dresses, like balloons cut in half. They stand up on the horses, and jump through hoops. It's round, all round, where the ladies are, and the horses, and there are little boys and girls looking on."

It is difficult for me to tell you how mysterious this description seemed to me, coming as it did from Caillou. I had taken him for walks hundreds of times. I had taken him to a review on the fourteenth of July—a "real" one. He had come with me to see aeroplanes on the cinematograph, and I had noticed that he had only been struck by minor details. At the review, a vendor of lemonade dressed as a vivandière, particularly attracted him, and at the cinematograph it was a gendarme, whose horse was frightened by Blériot's monoplane. In short, as far as my experience went, Caillou always proceeded by small degrees; he saw the tree, not the forest; and now, quite spontaneously, he described to me one

of the most usual sights at a circus. His mother, on the contrary, was absolutely astounded, and seemed ready to look upon him as a kind of small magician, for as I have told you, he had never been to a circus.

"Then there is a black nigger," he continued, "and a gentleman dressed like a very dirty gentleman with a big red nose. And they kick each other all the time, the gentleman with the red nose and the black nigger. And then they roll and roll in a ball, they put their feet under their arms, and their head between their legs. And there is a little boy dressed in blue silk, and a little girl dressed like a princess, with a parasol. They sit down on a bench and then they walk about together."

The mystery deepened, for I remembered quite well Prince Papillon and his little princess. They were childish memories of mine, and had disappeared long before Caillou's eyes first opened to the light. I asked him astonished, "Caillou, you've never seen all this, it's not possible."

"Oh, yes!" he protested proudly, "I really have."

"Where? Where did you go, and when?"

"I saw it on my bricks," he announced triumphantly, and proceeded to fetch them. They were little squares of wood, with bright pictures on them, and they could be arranged to fit in each other, so that the whole made, what Caillou in his language calls a "story."

All he had described was there, the ladies riding, the little children watching, the clown and the nigger, Prince Papillon and his little princess. Reduced, simplified, clear and minute, these pictures had entered into his memory. Had they been life-size, probably he would not have remembered them, but on these little squares of wood they had built a world of his own size, which he had assimilated. In his meditations, which we big people who do not *know* call his games, he doubtless gathered all these folk together in different poses and actions, and made them live.

This incident enabled me to understand what he meant the other day when he insisted on being taken to see the King of

Portugal pass by. The impression that the word " King " makes on children is a curious thing. I can only explain it by the tremendous influence of the fairy stories and picture books with which their brains are fed from their earliest infancy. I do not say that it should not be so. . . . That is quite another thing. " Once upon a time there lived a King and Queen " . . . and all that follows is admirable and wonderful. The pictures, coloured in red, green, gold and blue, in all the most dazzling colours, present to children's minds these kings and queens dressed differently to us, and *so* gorgeously !

Now, just think what Caillou's dreams must have been, when he knew that a real live king was coming, and that he was a boy not very much older than himself. He was filled with emotion and joy. He played at being Manoel, and at the end of a few minutes, he really thought he was !

" Very well," said his mother, " you shall see the King of Portugal."

He went off with an air of concentration, thoughtful, happy and oblivious of everyone

else. He was going to satisfy one of the greatest desires of his life.

He returned sad and depressed.

"Well," I asked, "didn't he pass? didn't you see him?"

"Yes," said he in a disappointed voice, "but he wasn't a bit like he ought to have been."

CHAPTER VII

CAILLOU AND GREED

TO-DAY I am invited to lunch, but I am of little importance, as Tili and Caillou are lunching with us. They are very good too, which means, in the language of their elders, that they haven't opened their mouths.

Children must have the most extraordinary vital energy, to be able to endure the long silences imposed upon them by the older folk. They must, moreover, have a greater capacity than we possess for discovering in the outer world sources of distraction and of interest.

It must also be remembered that they listen almost passionately to all that is said. It is as though they were on a voyage of discovery, and as an artist stores up pictures, so they store up words. They add words to their treasury, sometimes making mistakes

as to their meaning, or giving them one which, though not entirely false, is novel or extravagant, and which we think witty or deep. Possibly we think thus because we love them, for we are not nearly so kind to foreigners who are just beginning to stammer forth French.

Never repeat their sayings before children. If you give way to this, they will soon begin to string up their sentences carelessly, in the hope of surprising you, or of making you admire them. And again, watch over your words. Caillou's parents, and their real friends are always careful to do this.

I write these things here, in response to a sudden idea, but I will digress no more. For the moment, I am admiring in Caillou and Tili a resignation other than that of their silence.

The little waiting-maid in her white cap and apron hands them every dish that comes in. I don't know what prompts her to do so; is it perhaps a false respect for the little master and mistress who are paramount? Or is it sheer malice? For she knows they are bound to refuse many of

them. The medical profession and hygiene have for some years past interfered almost to excess in the diet of children. Caillou and Tili seem to eat hardly anything but brains, soles and purées, and I think they find this monotony somewhat insipid, for their young teeth feel the need to bite and to tear, but above all there is a great and insatiable curiosity, and is not that most naturally fixed on things to eat ? Just think ! The joys of taste have been the first to be revealed to them, and among the physical joys and sensations they will last the longest, they will help the human being to bear the burden of old age.

The activity of the vital functions is so great in children, they so often feel the honest desire of the body which we call appetite ; and, what is more, as they are watched and wisely restricted they are always a little bit hungry, and imagine they could always be eating !

You must not be surprised then, if their dearest satisfaction is to heap up remembrances of the sensations which gratify their little palate : how tempting then under

these conditions must have been the insidious gesture of the maid.

I look at them, I look at them with anxiety and compassion. Well, their apparent indifference is pathetic! Were they Hindoos or Mohammedans to whom a favourite dish might have been offered, a dish forbidden by their religion, they could not refuse more courteously, more firmly, nor more naturally. The good, courageous little creatures!

What a triumph for education! Nevertheless the law is not fulfilled without regrets, somewhat confused no doubt, and the real cause of which they have almost forgotten. Caillou has just finished his potato purée while we are eating hare pie, and the memory comes to him of a dish which he saw handed round at the beginning of the meal.

"Could I have a sardine?" he asks timidly.

"You know quite well, Caillou, that you are not allowed to have sardines," said his mother.

"Oh!" says Caillou, "it isn't to eat; I

only want to make it swim round in my glass!"

And I believe he is speaking the truth, or at any rate he likes to imagine he would stop at what he said. His sensuous curiosity has turned to a sort of æsthetic pre-occupation, and he would like to play with the thing he may not taste; it would be a sort of consolation.

This consolation is refused him. But never mind, at the end of the meal he and his sister will have the consolation of dessert; but again they will not be allowed to eat much of that, for certain theories of modern hygiene, as applied to children, forbids them raw apples and pears, and as far as possible oranges also, because of the pips which might set up appendicitis.

They are allowed sweets, however, because sugar is a food, and if Caillou and Tili wait so longingly for the end of the meal, it is because they know they will get one of those delicious sweets there upon the table. They are made of flavoured cream surrounded with a thin coating of caramel, and the children have to be very careful to keep every

scrap of the sweet in their mouth so that the cream may not drop and stain anything. That is the condition imposed, and the constraint adds to their pleasure, an effort of the will, a struggle.

It is, however, when they have had sweets given them that they most clearly demonstrate their sense of ownership. Just look at Caillou offering people a box of his sweets ! He is so pleased and proud at the sacrifice he is making.

The other day he had only one stick of barley-sugar, and Tili asked for half. It was too much ! He thought for a moment.

" No," said he, " I've only got one, and it's my own, but when I've finished it you can kiss my mouth before I lick it ! "

The severe discipline to which Caillou's greed has been subjected surprises me a little, for my own childhood was not a victim to it. But I feel that it has its good points, not only on account of the children's health, but because it suggests to them that all their life there will be forbidden things as well as legitimate ones. It also has its bad side, however, for children are always

inclined to think that little people and big ones belong to two different races, having neither the same habits, nor the same privileges. And big people are inclined to think the same, to think of children as creatures to be deceived for their own good, with a view to training and to health. Caillou has found this out and suffered from it, because he is proud. He does not like people to use his greediness as a pretext for giving him medicine without his knowledge. Red-currant jam with santonin, castor-oil in sweets, which you must swallow " without biting, Caillou, without biting ! "

He thinks he and the things he likes are being betrayed, for it isn't natural that good things should have disagreeable and, in his own mind, humiliating results. He did not express himself in this majestic and abstract manner, but it is the essence of what he said, and, as he was perfectly right, they gave in, on condition that he would be brave.

You can always appeal to Caillou's courage, because it is a primitive and manly instinct in him, much stronger even than the desire

not to be deceived. In children, courage and the power to bear pain are, especially in the case of small boys, proportionate to the length of life before them, a life they believe to be endless, because they do not understand death. That is one of the reasons why they live in a world of heroic romance as it were. Another reason is, that in nearly all the circumstances of life they are obliged to submit and obey. To brave pain is almost their only means of retaliation, and it would be wicked to deprive them of it.

Such are my reflections, and they make me feel a little sad, for I know also that pain is unconquerable and eternal. . . .

Caillou doesn't think so, however. I remember last year we took him out in a sailing-boat beyond the island of Brehat, on the same sea which he said "had only one shore." It was the first time he had been in a boat, and the waves had no consideration for him. Caillou was surprised and ashamed at feeling ill, and as he did not know the reason for it, he attributed it to the only powers known to him . . . ourselves. When

quiet was restored to his poor little shuddering body, he stamped his foot, and, looking indignantly at us, cried, " I've told you heaps of times, I *wouldn't* have medicine given me without being told ! "

CHAPTER VIII

THE HORSE'S EGG

CAILLOU, who has spent the holidays in the country with Uncle Jules, felt for a long time out of his element. He doesn't know whether he likes the country or merely thinks it beautiful; such precise opinions can only be expressed by grown-up people. Caillou says and knows that he loves his mother and father, myself too, no doubt, and the human beings around him, with the exception of a very few, who inspire him with fear and dislike; but he cannot describe the feeling he had among the trees, the fields, and the rivers; he was certainly happy. He wouldn't even have noticed that he was happy, if he had not felt, on returning to Paris, a sort of vague and indescribable longing . . . vague and indescribable, because his vocabulary as yet contains no abstract words, and also because

he has not lived long enough to go back to the source of his impressions. It is just the same when he wants to go to sleep at night, he becomes " nervy " and impatient and grumpy. But if you say to him, " Come, Caillou, it is time to go to bed," he melts into tears and says, " No, no, I don't want to go to bed."

He does not know that he is sleepy, and in the same way he does not know he loved the country and now misses it.

But when his Uncle Jules comes to Paris he climbs on to his knees, and under the pretext of kissing him, he sniffs curiously at the limp hunting stock he wears. His mother, who thinks this most improper, scolds him : " Whatever is the matter with you, Caillou ? "

Caillou answers sententiously, as if he had made a great discovery, " He smells . . . he smells the same as Chailly ! "

That is because he has noticed a freshness that lingers about the face, when one has been all day in the open air ; the odour of the dying leaves, faintly bitter but persistent, and of the skin, which has absorbed

the living breath of the moors. Caillou still has the primitive instinct which now stirs his imagination. With his nose buried in Uncle Jules' cravat, he sees again the scenes that he thought he had forgotten.

I think it is a good opportunity to question him, " What was there at Chailly ? Do you remember ? "

He dives into his memory and produces, " Bulls and cows, and hens, and geese, and horses . . . yes, horses ! "

Always the same incapacity to remember inanimate things ! Horses especially interest him. Those he sees in Paris feed his curiosity, while, strangely enough, automobiles leave him completely indifferent. They have no mystery about them ; he knows that they have been made by man, who, in his opinion, can make everything. They are only mechanical toys. Animals, on the contrary, are beyond him altogether — huge, wilful, and only half tamed.

One Saturday, before going back to the country, Uncle Jules asks, " What shall I bring you from Chailly, Caillou ? " Caillou

has no need to think it over; he answers at once, " A horse ! "

Uncle Jules is not always a right-thinking man. He belongs to the numerous category of grown-ups who imagines that children were put into the world just to amuse them, and who do not treat them with any degree of fairness. If you will only think it over, you will see that such an attitude is quite immoral.

" I can't bring you a horse," says Uncle Jules, " they cost too much, but I will bring you a horse's egg, if you like."

This proposal doesn't astonish Caillou in the least. All the animals with which he is really familiar, such as hens or canaries, for instance, lay eggs. In his opinion, it is the only method of reproduction; and it is not his fault, it is the fault of those who are deceiving him. He clasps his hands, and thanks Uncle Jules over and over again.

Uncle Jules goes off, followed by my strong disapproval, but I dare say nothing, for I am not one of the family. Besides, I think to-morrow night will be time enough to tell Caillou the truth, and to try and soften the

inevitable blow. However, Uncle Jules is a cunning fellow, who perseveres in his designs. Caillou, who is waiting with that hope mingled with anxiety, which makes the time go so slowly, sees him come back the next day, followed by a porter carrying on his shoulders a huge round thing, wrapped up in brown paper.

"Here's the egg, Caillou!"

Caillou is pale with joy and emotion. They help him to untie the parcel, and take off the paper, and lo and behold, a pumpkin lies on the hall carpet before him, all yellow-red, gigantic and rugged! It has been purchased at the nearest fruiterer's! Such a monster shell is necessary indeed to contain a baby horse! Caillou has no doubt of it, and is only afraid of breaking the egg. He touches it with a mixture of prudence, love and veneration, and clamours to know what day the baby horse will be born, and what must be done to hatch the egg. His enthusiasm is such that no one dare tell him the truth. I should like to kick Uncle Jules!

"Rubbish!" says he; "I'll make it all right."

Yes, he'll make it all right so as to give himself a little more amusement, I am sure of that. I am annoyed, too, with myself for being so pedantic and for remembering just at this moment that the Latins used the word " puer " for both slave and child !

Caillou's uncle forgets that he would never dare to abuse the ignorance of a man of his own age, because, if he did, it might have unpleasant consequences for himself. I am still more annoyed with myself for looking upon this piece of treachery as an experience which will tell me what Caillou is going to make of this fairy tale, how he will colour it, and also how he will accept the deception practised upon him.

I look at him, and see that he has completely forgotten us, that he has forgotten all the world, and lives only in the dream of the immense possibilities which are opening out before him. Not out of pity, but out of respect for his dignity as a human being. I explain seriously to him that he need only keep the egg wrapped up and warm in front of the fire. He shall *not* be made ridiculous ! I should never forgive myself if that were so.

Caillou listens, his eyes eager and confident, but I can see that it is a tremendous effort to him not to hug this lying egg in his arms, and warm it with the heat of his body.

Alas! I have only bereft him of a pleasure! He keeps getting up from table to go and look at this horse's egg, which he has pushed with much trouble to the front of the fire. He is impatient for bed-time, he who, as I have already told you, loves living so much that he never wants to go to bed. He longs for the time when he will feel the object of all his thoughts against his feet under the warm eiderdown, and eventually he drops to sleep in such an ecstacy that his dreaming lips murmur words which cannot be understood.

Then, gently, cunningly, with infinite precaution, Uncle Jules steals this famous horse's egg, swearing to bring it back before Caillou wakes up. To do him credit, he keeps his word, and is to be congratulated thereon, for Caillou would have been absolutely inconsolable otherwise.

The first thing Caillou sees the next morning is Uncle Jules smiling at him, and

he feels the egg at the bottom of his bed. The Magic is still going on, for Uncle Jules says, with a wise look, " I think I can hear something. It's going to hatch, Caillou ! The baby horse is coming out."

Caillou puts his ear to the monstrous thing, and he really hears something—little movements, a sort of scratching against the side—life, in short ! He is trembling all over.

" I think," says Uncle Jules, " the little horse wants to come out, but the shell of this egg is so hard, I must help to break it."

He pulls a knife out of his pocket, and Caillou does not see that during the night this great red and yellow mass has had a piece like a cover cut out of the top, and then put back again ; also that it is much lighter.

He waits, the cover moves, and out comes —a rabbit ! A tiny white rabbit, not a bit frightened at his imprisonment.

What will Caillou think ? What will he say ? It's not a horse, and he knows the difference between a rabbit and a horse. No doubt, he will be very angry, or, worse still, will he cry ?

He does neither ! He is still full of wonder, and accepts the miracle, such as it is. It is only a rabbit, but for a mite like Caillou it is a very delightful and satisfying thing to have a rabbit of one's own. He ponders with shining eyes and parted lips, then he asks, " What must he have to eat ? "

They have had to give the rabbit a home in the kitchen, which is not very pleasant, but it is only right that big people should have to pay for doing silly things, or for allowing these silly things to be done.

Sometimes, when there are visitors, they say to him, " Come and tell us about the horse's egg, Caillou ! " And he begins willingly, without in the least seeing that they are making fun of him. " I had a horse's egg, but it was hatched too soon, so a rabbit came instead of a horse."

That is his explanation of the matter. He is quite satisfied with it, and, for my part, I think it is an admirable one, and most significant of the progress of the human mind, which is made up of a series of mistakes.

CHAPTER IX

TILI AND FEAR

DOUBTLESS you remember that when Caillou was five years old he objected to fowls, and, possibly with some reason on his part, regarded them as fantastic, uncertain, crafty creatures, likely at any moment to attack his bare legs.

The story of his encounter with the hen had caused general amusement at the time, and since he is eighteen months older, the recollection of the affair humiliates him.

Now, during his holidays in the country, he treats the denizens of the poultry yard with scant respect, he chases them around, throws stones at them, renders the cock dejected, and works up the hens to such a pitch of agitation that they neglect their sacred duty and omit to lay the daily egg.

I do my best to put a stop to his bellicose

antics, for it is the middle of summer and the farmer's wife will soon be up in arms about it; but my lectures have been in vain, Caillou is more unruly when running wild, the fresh air and the sunshine seem to get to his brain.

Eventually I hit upon a plan to calm his too exuberant spirits. I said to him one day at lunch—

"Caillou, you've a grudge against the poor hens, but when you thought them stronger than yourself you were not quite so brave."

He coloured and looked into his plate, then by way of justification, retorted—

"Tili isn't as brave as I am, she was afraid to *play* even when she was five."

It was now Tili's turn to exhibit the greatest confusion.

Caillou's remark demands some explanation; he really meant to say, that when he was a tiny little fellow he feared all animals, including those that he had always seen through the protection of iron bars, at the Jardin des Plantes, such as lions, wolves, tigers, and serpents; but that his fear begot an imaginary courage, and that in his mind

he could picture himself attacking and slaying them.

With Tili the case was different.

I have already told what a demoralising effect the company of a certain young rascal, Boulot by name, had upon the innocent and pliable nature of Caillou.

Boulot was a " big boy " of fourteen years, and his ideas, at times so outrageous, produced in his young disciple ecstatic admiration ; but with Tili the effect was otherwise, and the visits of that mischievous youth usually plunged her in despair and misery.

At Boulot's transitional age, boys have only contempt for girls, and no doubt from a certain point of view this is desirable, but from the little girls' point of view, it is humiliating and deplorable.

Even at so tender an age Tili took a great interest in her appearance and appreciated a pretty compliment ; and it must be remembered that she had already developed a fondness for all " mauvais sujets." Had the cruel unprincipled Boulot so willed he could have found in her a willing slave, who,

with a happy devotion, would play at making herself useful.

If Boulot lapsed for a moment from behaving like a wild man Tili followed him with timid, eager step, just as Caillou did. The cynical young scamp had noticed this and traded upon the fact. He would first of all kiss her.

"What a nice little girl Tili is to-day," he would murmur; "what pretty hair she has; no other little girl is so pretty as Tili."

Tili's eyes would brighten and her heart would swell with pride.

"We'll play at being angels," the graceless youth would continue.

"I'll be the angel, and you stand in front of me, Tili."

Without hesitation she would obey him.

Boulot would perch himself upon a chair (their relative position was intended, I imagine, to suggest the heavens above and the earth beneath). Then Boulot would stretch out his arms like wings, his malicious face would light up with a truly angelic smile, and it was pathetic to see the false ecstacy of Boulot's countenance reflected in

the little face of Tili. . . . Tili whose heart thumped with joy and whose whole being breathed expectation and rapture.

"I am an angel from heaven, come down to kiss little Tili," went on the plausible Boulot, flapping his wings more gracefully (I'm sure Tili could see real wings) and smiling more irresistibly than ever while Tili stood there entranced.

Suddenly, without warning, the unscrupulous Boulot would utter an interminable howl; a piercing, ghastly yell that made one think of snow and winter-time, of night and death.

"Look out, Tili," he would say, "I'm a hungry wolf."

His face would change from the angelic to the hideous, he would show his teeth and stretch out his hands like claws.

It would be a dreadful shock to Tili, she would feel as though she were cast from heaven into an awful abyss, full of raging beasts, waiting to devour her. Completely terror stricken she would fly behind a curtain, and out of the room shrieking—

"No, no, I don't want him to be a hungry wolf."

There was no pretence about her fear, it was an awful heart-rending terror that showed itself plainly upon her face. She was afraid with every nerve strained to the uttermost ; afraid with all her might.

That was not the end of the performance, however, for Boulot would resume his place upon the chair and say with much decision—

" Whatever is the matter, Tili, we are not playing at the hungry wolf, we're playing at angels."

Poor Tili would return at once as though drawn by a magnet, her tears would stop and her little bosom would be eased of its load of fear. Then the game would begin afresh, with Tili's full consent, only to end as before, and to be repeated again until Boulot was thoroughly tired of the fun.

Can you understand all this ? If we hadn't interfered, the outrageous affair might have been repeated weekly, for months.

Tili loathed her tormentor, yet she expected this fascinating but brutal comedy to be played at her expense ; otherwise she would have been disappointed.

After dinner she would go to her father and say—

"Daddy, tell me a story about a wolf."

If he did so she would shudder with terror so long as the wolf was represented as a hungry wolf, in other words, a devourer of lambs and men, and particularly of little girls.

Caillou, would listen impatiently to this part of the story, questioning repeatedly.

"What comes after? What comes after?"

He was waiting for the advent of the woodman with an axe, or, better still, a young man with a dog, and a sword, perhaps a gun, anything . . . and the death of the wolf.

That was the interesting part of the story as far as Caillou was concerned, a portion to which, by the way, Tili gave but a wandering attention, for that which was of paramount importance to her was her fear.

Atavism does not explain it; there really is no explanation to the story.

To-day Caillou is the most peaceful of mortals and Tili does not know the meaning of fear; in fact, she never has known it.

They have both the imaginations of their sex, however, and of their race, and in those early days their imaginations ran riot; thus Caillou loved to conquer and Tili loved to be afraid. That is certain to my mind, for when others referred to these matters in front of them, Tili would say—

"But I never was afraid of *fowls*."

She was speaking the truth for, womanlike, she was a realist in everyday affairs; she saw them as they really are, without prying into the wherefore.

CHAPTER X

CAILLOU AND HIS FATHER

DO you remember that, when I used to say to Caillou's mother, "He loves you; you are his first love," she didn't deny it, but loved her son the more for it? Now I imagined that Caillou had no definite opinion, as far as his father was concerned. It seemed to me that to his little boy Caillou's father was some one who goes off in the morning and returns at night; some one to be kissed at *café-au-lait* time, who is even then deep in his paper, and who in an absent way bends down to return your kiss; one who then goes away, disappears from off the face of the earth as though he were not, for children forget so quickly, and who only turns up again at dinner-time to put on dress clothes or a lounge coat, and say, "Has everybody been good to-day?"

I *could* see that Caillou admired his father, and copied him principally in walking about with his hands in his pockets and swearing, pretending to his nurse to be Daddy in a temper. But, if I may say so, as he also admires and copies me, I concluded that it was the instinct of the little male animal awaking in him, and that he studied men in order to learn things, and to play at being like them.

His mother tried to undeceive me, but in vain. "You are quite mistaken," said she, "and you are making your usual error. You start off with the mere suggestion of something, with half an observation, and from this you deduce an absolutely false hypothesis, just because it pleases you, or because it pieces together and amuses you. It may be a masterpiece of reasoning. I don't understand such matters, but I'm perfectly certain that it is not true.

"This is the truth! There is just the same difference between the affection Caillou gives me and that he gives to his father, as between human and divine love. I am too near, too kind, too much of a friend and a con-

fidante. He has need of me; he couldn't do without me; and he is exacting, coaxingly and deliciously exacting to me. He knows he can ask everything of me, and that it makes me happy that he should.

"Shall I tell you what I really do think? Caillou and I—both of us—know quite well that he is my master. He is not the master of his father, and that is what makes him happy—it is the great, secret, mysterious, splendid happiness of little fellows that to their mother they are even as men, but they are loving, submissive, and lost in mystic admiration, just like women, for the being who, as you say, goes away in the morning and comes back at night. And in this they imitate us, for that really is the attitude of women who are good wives, *real* women, desirous above all of preserving their womanliness.

"But even in divided households where children have not this example, where they live in an atmosphere of mutual boredom and recrimination, have you ever noticed how their sympathies, their need to respect and love, instinctively goes out to the father?

I know that this state of mind changes later with boys. As soon as they have left us, they remember, and I know that this will be my joy in life when I am old. I can even relish things as they are now, saying to myself, 'my boy is as he should be,' and it would not be right were he otherwise."

I wasn't convinced. I wouldn't consent to it for certain personal and fatuous reasons. It appeared to me that *I* was the real friend much more than the father, that Caillou asked me more questions and opened out much more to me, that he was much more of a child with me, just because he so often said ingenuously. "When I'm grown up. . . .'

Since then my eyes have been opened. Another day has been added to the sum total of days, and Caillou's father returns as usual to dinner. He is sad and absent-minded, and out of humour with himself. That sort of thing often happens, doesn't it? Perhaps you, too, have those moments, when you say to yourself, "I've done a foolish thing! Just the opposite to that which I ought to have done!"

And then you think how simple it would have been to have done the opposite ; you can't imagine why you didn't think of it. You are humiliated by your failure, by your mistake, by what people will think of you. You are made small in your own eyes, and you suddenly feel yourself of infinitely less consequence in the huge world of men. And it is a feeling that hurts ! You also feel that it is no good confessing your failure ; you know you must " say nothing about it," yet you nearly always do, because the thought of it pursues you, and will not leave you in peace.

The soup is smoking on the table and the serviettes are unfolded. Caillou is sitting in his high chair. He has accomplished all the rites, has held up his face for a kiss, and is good, that is to say dumb, but he is waiting to be spoken to, that he may be allowed to speak in his turn. He is waiting for his father to ask him, " Have you been naughty to-day ? " He knows he is not going to be scolded or punished. It is only a little examination of conscience that they force upon him, so that he may remember that

right and wrong exist, and that he may learn to be careful.

Caillou always answers truly, both because he does not tell stories, and because, after he has answered his father, he is allowed to talk for a little while, until they begin discussing things which he does not in the least understand, but to which he listens, for he listens to everything. In his memory he has a corner for the tales and words whose meaning he doesn't know, and it is the tidiest corner there ; it is the one to which he most often comes. Sometimes when he is listening to a story not meant for him he says, "Ah!" involuntarily, or falls into a profound reverie. Don't ask him any questions, for you might feel somewhat embarrassed yourself. He has just connected this new tale with another, and is drawing his own conclusions!

To-day, his list of misdeeds is not a serious one, and his conscience is tranquil enough. He wasn't good with his nurse, and disobeyed her, but afterwards he obeyed and begged her pardon, so that is nothing. On certain evenings the confession has been harder to make. He has told an untruth, although,

I repeat, he is not a fibber naturally. And then there was that day when he had taken a penknife out of the study and dug a hole in the nursery wall "to make a grotto!" When, terrified at the gaping orifice, he had filled it up with soap, because, to him, the soap looked just the same colour as the paint!

To-day Caillou goes straight to the point with calm, frank eyes, which look you right in the face. It is all over; his father makes no remark; everything is all right. Then quite naturally Caillou returns to the original subject, and because he now has a right to speak, he asks, "And what have you been doing, Father?"

Then all the regrets, the heart burnings, the remorse of the day come back; they show up clearly, pressing in upon him, almost visible, like human beings, and with similar voices and forms.

"What have I been doing? Something silly!"

Silence! Caillou's mother herself looks a little anxious, and awaits developments. But before she has had time to ask a single question, another care absorbs her, her

solicitude is given to another; for Caillou's face is changing, lengthening, contracting—she knows what is coming! Caillou is going to cry.

And Caillou *does* cry, silently at first, and then with big sobs that hurt him and everybody else. He has fallen into an abyss and his soul is suffering, and is afraid; it is stirring amongst the ruins of a religion that has just fallen to pieces. His father has done "something silly!" He himself has said it, and in a way that proves it to be true, and not a "make-up" for children. So it *is* possible, this impossibility! Then what has become of God in heaven!

They all comfort and love him as he has never been loved, but his heart is heavy and his lashes wet, and when he is put in his little bed he is still crying.

Then the big people find themselves alone once more, and they try hard to talk of other things. I simply cannot. I cannot get away from the thought of this occurrence, so small and unimportant in appearance. I cannot get away from the child who is sighing in his sleep near us because he has lost his

faith. And I reflect that, nineteen centuries ago, when men assisted in the destruction of their belief in the golden age of humanity—or at least when they learned that this joy of living had only lasted a few days, and had been killed by the faults of their first forefathers—they must have experienced the same despair, the same love and pity, and the same humiliation.

CHAPTER XI

CAILLOU AND OWNERSHIP

ONE of the things that struck me most and from the first in my friend Caillou was his extreme and scrupulous nicety as regards honesty. He has a sort of religious feeling about it, if I may use that term, and to take what does not belong to him, inspires him with a real horror. At first I was astonished and even a little annoyed when I noticed this, because this infantine probity is contrary to my theories.

Like all self-respecting adult Frenchmen, I am a rank materialist. I believe that man began by being a savage, cruel, unrestrained and greedy, instinctively loving pillage and rapine; and that much time had to elapse before he ceased to behave towards his fellow-creatures like a fierce unchained wolf.

It is also a known fact that one finds the naked soul of primitive humanity in children,

and Caillou in many ways seems to justify this point of view exactly. If he be not sensual, it is that as yet he has no senses, but he dreams of battle and murder. For him the finest tales are those in which there is " killing " . . . in which a child perhaps kills giants; and again he has no vestige of pity for the creatures he catches, butterflies, and flies, and worms.

He is not naturally cleanly, in fact he seems to experience the keenest delight in dirtying his clothes and himself, while for greediness, and even voracity, he is second to none. He is still at that happy age when his little inside is so young and strong that it never gives him the smallest reminder of its existence. Caillou, you know, has an idea that his stomach is a huge pocket that reaches from his neck to his thighs, and which in consequence he can never hope to fill! He would do his best to accomplish this feat were he not prevented, for he would never know of his own accord when to stop eating; healthy children are, I think, like savages in this respect. Yet at the same time, we have Caillou respecting the pos-

sessions of another! That upsets all my calculations!

I very nearly went from one extreme to the other, and believed in ideas innate, and those acquired by heredity, but he and I live too much together now, we are too great chums for my hypothesis to resist for long the effects of experience.

At last I discovered the origin of Caillou's honesty—the predominant characteristic is a strong sense of "mine and thine." Because some things are his own, he realises that others belong to his neighbour: he suffers if anyone takes away his belongings, so others are quite justified in making a scene if theirs are removed, because they suffer too, for Caillou, who abounds in logic, is also feeling!

Nevertheless, that alone would not suffice. Children have a great need of holding in their hands the things that charm their eyes, of tasting things to eat, of appropriating the things around them, and making up games with them, but they are also filled with the instinct to imitate. They do what they see others do, and when others leave

certain things undone, they follow the example. Now the people whom Caillou knows do not steal, and there is little need for suggestion or command in this respect. They have hardly said to him half a dozen times "You mustn't steal." Generally speaking, big people have to exercise pressure only when they want to prevent little ones from doing what they themselves are prone to do. That is why it is frequently necessary to remind children that they must not tell stories (they so often hear us distorting the truth) or get angry; they feel instinctively that our loss of self-control is so ugly.

Caillou the Honest has gone for a walk with his sister, Lucile. He has been to the Tuileries again, and come back by the Marché St Honoré and the boulevards. At the present moment, lunch time, he is comfortably settled in his high chair, but lost in thought.

It is easy enough to see when children are absorbed in something. It puts a sort of veil over their eyes and across their forehead, because they do not as a rule think deeply.

Caillou is nicely behaved, he never speaks

at table, but that veil is over his eyes now, and his mother looks at him with a little anxiety. What's the matter with him? he is eating quite heartily and looks well. Shall she ask him? One never knows when to question little children.

However, Caillou is a man, and he cannot long keep to himself what he has on his mind. (Perhaps it would be different were he a little girl!) At dessert, when he is allowed to get down from his chair, he comes close to me, and I see that the veil is no longer there. He has really made up his mind to ask an explanation from those who "know," and his care is gone. He will believe what he is told, that is all; so he begins, "Mother, you don't know what Tili did."

Tili, hearing her name mentioned, suddenly puts on a saintly expression, and Caillou's mother listens.

"Well," goes on Caillou, "when we passed the grocer's near the market-place, there were two strawberries fallen down from the stall, two *big* strawberries! Then Tili picked them up, and ate them!"

"Oh!" says Caillou's mother.

She says " Oh " because she must say something, and also because she thinks it's not very clean to eat strawberries picked up in the streets.

" That's stealing, isn't it ? " says Caillou.

That is what is worrying him, and it is the one thing his mother has *not* thought of.

" No," says she rather at a loss, " it isn't exactly stealing, but it's dirty, not at all nice."

" But not stealing ? " reiterates Caillou.

" No," answers his mother.

Then Caillou, suddenly furious, flings out his fist at Tili and shrieks, " Why didn't you give me one, then ? "

This adventure led me to try to find out whether Caillou's five-year-old mind had any conception of money. The various conversations I have had with him on this subject have not resulted in any precise discovery. The word " money " evoked in Caillou the idea of coins right enough, of pieces of shining metal, but I couldn't tell if he understood the use of them. However, a

few of his remarks led me to suppose that he looked upon money as a thing analogous to a beard, desirable because it belonged to big people only. This again was one of the many misconceptions caused by not using words suitable to his age.

One day I arrived later than usual at the Tuileries, and I saw that Caillou was waiting for me with great impatience. He came straight for me like a small cannon ball, head first, and flung himself against my knees. This eagerness flattered me, for I attributed it to love, but Caillou burst out, " Take me to the cake-woman."

I know the cake-woman. She is a lady who lives in an extinguisher, to quote Caillou himself. This extinguisher is made of wood, painted green, and isn't far from the pond, near the Place de la Concorde. When we got to the stall, my young friend gave me an imperious command, " Lift me up ! " And I did as he wished.

Thus hoisted up, Caillou's head was on a level with the cake-woman's. From this position of perfect equality he said to her, " Madame, I gave you *two* sous ; you owe

me two cakes" ("Madame, je t'avais donné deux sous; tu me dois deux gâteaux.")

You follow? If when pursuing my inquiries, I had used the word "sou" instead of "money," I should have seen at once that Caillou knows the value of sous, and doesn't like being cheated. He had tried to settle the business himself, but he was too little, and the lady of the extinguisher could not hear him. That was why he was looking out for me, to be placed on a level with her!

Thus I learned that he can both calculate and defend his own interests. By and by, he gave me another striking proof of this.

"The lady is selling 'palmiers,'" said he.

Before we had become intimate, I should have thought he was referring to tropical trees, and should have felt somewhat astonished. But I have become learned in his company, and I am no longer ignorant of the fact that "palmiers" are little sweet cakes. Those sold under the extinguisher are just about as big as a five-franc piece.

"The lady is selling 'palmiers,'" he went on, "and if it's half a dozen you buy, you

get seven for five sous, but if it's a dozen, you only get twelve for ten sous."

" Well, Caillou ? "

" 'Tisn't fair ! "

This problem of political economy occupied him for several days, but at last he found the solution. Again I had to serve as his pedestal before the cake-woman.

" Madame," said he, holding out a fifty-centime piece, " give me two half-dozens of seven ! " (" Donne-moi z'en deux demi-douzaines de sept ! ")

CHAPTER XII

CAILLOU'S NEST

WHEN I look out of my window, I can see it quite plainly. That block of buildings is not so high as the one in which I live, and my windows overlook its roofs. When I look out, I see the sparrows' nest . . . *my* sparrows' nest, I call it. . . . By some strange process, when one sees an object day after day, and especially when that object increases one's interest by changing daily, it becomes at last a part of one's universe, and, in a peculiar fashion of its own, one's property, so to speak. Whether it be a field of corn just beginning to sprout, then growing higher and higher, until the ears form and turn a golden yellow; or cherry trees, clothing themselves in blossom and then in foliage, while the fruit gradually appears, first of a dull jade green, then bright

emerald changing into a blazing crimson. It may be a house in building, the walls of which mount higher daily. Perchance it is a nest, a poor little nest. . . . For my part, I've the same sort of feeling about a ladder, left on the roof by the slaters, a fortnight since ; when they come to fetch it away, something will be wanting.

The nest is much more interesting, however. Its little builders have placed it out of the reach of the rain, and of stray cats, under the penthouse of a large garret window, now blocked up with planks, and probably never opened. An iron bar fastens it securely, and the slope of the roof, as well as the rampart of high walls, protects the nest on three sides against the fresh breezes from the north, the heavy storms from the west, and the south wind, that usually brings rain. It is only exposed on the east side, so it will get plenty of sun.

When the little sparrows begin to leave the nest, they will be saved from falling by the gutter, which, by the way, is not without its disadvantages, for at the end of this gutter is the dangerous perpendicular

outlet, down which the rainwater travels to the cistern underground, and experience has taught me that very often the hapless little creatures are caught there like rats in a trap, with nothing to await them but a slow and awful death. I have also noticed that the parent birds do not understand this danger ; the cause of it must be beyond their comprehension. Instinct and tradition tell them that the place is a safe one against feline marauders and rain, and so they choose it for their home.

It amuses me to throw out odds and ends of material for the use of the little workers. They don't hesitate a moment at the sight of a bit of wadding and some ends of thread, and the other day, one of them flew off triumphantly with a beautiful piece of pink ribbon in his beak. He didn't refuse a scrap of sacking either, but I could never get either of them to have anything to do with a pretty bit of crinkled Japanese paper though it seemed infinitely superior to the hempen tissue they preferred. Who can explain the rejection ? What did sparrows do in the days before there were

men and weavers? There must have been a time when they changed their materials, and realised that other things might well be of service to them.

I've never seen sparrows "playing" at building a nest, and that's very curious, for they play at flying, and chasing one another, and even at making love. But they never make a nest, save in the building season. And they never pick up the tiniest stick that cannot be utilised by them; then, when the mating season and the rearing of the young is over, they never look at their nests again.

Just as I got to that point in my rêverie, a thought came back to me. I *have* known of a nest made in play. True, it was not made by a bird, but by Caillou when he was six years old.

It happened in the big garden that I have told you of before, that old garden that borders on the deep forest of which it is a part, although so different. For the forest resembles nothing but itself, or at least its different aspects remain unchanged over wide expanses of land. You come to the pine

wood, and are surrounded by pines alone; further on you admire at your leisure a variety of lofty full-grown trees, and in the plantation, as far as the eye can reach, the air sparkles luminously through the lines of young birches; while the gardens our fathers delighted in, in the days when they mistook the sentimental elation of the mind for the manifestation of the yearnings of a sensitive soul, these gardens are nothing but pattern-cards of the great wonders of Nature.

In them may be found waterfalls, hills, labyrinths, rivers and lakes, fields and copses, all very puerile because they are so small. However, like trees, which on growing old, become indocile, and refuse to be trained in the way they should go, these artificial gardens, when left to themselves, return to nature, and in so doing, touch one with a sense of pathos. Children understand these copies of the real, and are in their element among them, because they are proportionate to their own small stature.

So we were not very surprised that Caillou should play at getting lost in the garden

. . . he couldn't wander very far . . . . But we did think it rather strange that he persistently disappeared in the same grove of lilac trees. They were, I must confess, beautiful old lilacs, and no doubt looked very grand to the upward gaze of a little six-year-old. They suggested miniature giants, with their twisted trunks, bigger than Caillou's arm, and up which (with the help of the niche made by their largest branches) he could climb, and penetrate the mystery of their luxuriant foliage. All the same, there didn't seem to be anything to keep him there for the whole of a day, and he did stay there day after day. What on earth could he be doing!

We spied upon, and followed him, but to begin with we discovered nothing, for when Caillou heard our heavy footsteps approaching, he assumed the expression of one, who has nothing particular to do, and nowhere in particular to go.

"What are you doing there, Caillou?" we asked.

"Can't you see me playing?" he replied.

Children have secrets that they keep for

themselves alone and that they would rather die than surrender, partly because they respect their own inner life too much, and also because they have noticed that older people generally make fun of what interests children.

When Caillou was undressed at night, a more eccentric collection of articles than usual was discovered in his pockets, all of them, nevertheless, bearing some relation to one another . . . bits of cotton, tow and straw; he had also plundered the bundle of raffia that the gardener uses for sticking peas.

It was all very strange, for after a few days had passed, Caillou stopped rifling the garden, but was the more persistent in taking refuge in his chosen retreat. I contented myself with watching him from a distance, and I saw him standing with his head thrown back, looking up at something with the utmost attention. His mother and I slipped so quickly into the lilac grove, that he hadn't time to turn round, nor to change the direction of his gaze. And then we saw what he had been gloating over all this time;

it was a nest . . . a nest he had made himself; a poor little nest, so clumsily and artlessly put together, that even the sparrows (who are not hard to please) wouldn't have looked at it.

And what pains he had taken! How hard he had tried to make it look like a real nest! Outermost he had placed the straw, all beautifully smooth and even, and tied together with bits of thread. It was lined with the windfalls he had so patiently collected, and to crown all he had put a little piece of white satin inside as a sort of counterpane, the effect of which was exquisitely comical and touching.

We both burst into fits of laughter, and naturally Caillou dissolved into tears.

"So you're going to lay eggs, Caillou," I said foolishly. He stamped his foot indignantly. It was cruel to accuse him of so disordered an imagination. He knew that neither little boys nor even little girls laid eggs, and yet I accused him of making up such silly things; it was most unjust! At last he sobbed:

"It isn't for me! it isn't for me! Of

course it's for the birds to come and lay eggs in ! "

I regained my composure, and tried to give him a lesson in natural history. His nest was not built like the nest of any little bird ; neither robin redbreasts, nor wrens, nor tomtits would ever let themselves be deceived by it, and it was no use hoping they would.

He looked at me contemptuously.

" What about cuckoos ? " he demanded.

He had me there ! Of course, why shouldn't a cuckoo leave an egg in Caillou's nest. I should have found great difficulty in answering that question, for it was I myself who had taught him that cuckoos were the laziest of creatures, who delighted in taking advantage of other birds' work.

And I realised that Caillou was a true specimen of the genus Man ; in his own way he tried his hardest to conquer Nature.

CHAPTER XIII

THE MYSTERY

SPRING has come, and when she enters the children's room in the morning she is so bright and warm and clear that we could almost believe that it is she who lights the fire which is still kept going in the grate. Even old people, even people like you and me, have a wish to weep for no cause whatever, like a bride awaiting her husband ; and as for Caillou, he is drunk, absolutely drunk with joy from dawn to night. His cheeks are rosier, even when he has not been running or playing, he gesticulates more, he who before was so free in gesture, and he is more noisy, more quick-tempered, more lively, more passive, and more loving.

Sometimes, as I have told you, I have tried to account for the restless energy of fox terriers, in the following way. I have

said to myself, " in the bodies of these little creatures, who have been created, so to speak, by patient and clever breeding, there is the system of a very big dog, a force which is almost too great for them to bear, and which completely overwhelms them. Reasoning in this vein, I imagine that children come into this world with the intelligence, the temperament, the latent capacity both mental and emotional, to sustain all the suffering, love and hatred that will possess them when they become grown men and women. Eyesight and hearing are as good at five years of age as at twenty-five ; the only difference lies in the sum of sensations felt, in experience and knowledge ; in what the years teach you, and in what you learn from books and your fellow-men. But children, as children, hold the complete man and woman that is to be, prisoned in a tiny envelope, and it is possibly because of this that their eyes are always so beautiful and their little bodies so full of life. Now if you regard things in this light you can realise how deeply the Spring affects them, for they themselves have yet to grow and blossom. Most certainly they

have individuality and yet they are like young growing plants.

It is all this no doubt that makes Caillou's mother keep saying to him, " Whatever is the matter with you? You are quite unmanageable! "

He feels gigantic inside, you see, and wants to expand. I overheard him say to his sister, " I'm not frightened of anything. I would like to kill lions. . . . Wolves I'd kill . . . and whales! "

Again I notice that he only mentions animals he has never seen, except in picture-books, and which consequently form a part of his imaginary kingdom. Then I remind him of a certain hen, before which he once so shamefully fled! For a moment, when he thinks of it he is surprised and confused, but he soon raises his diminished head.

" Yes, and I'd kill a hen too! I shouldn't be frightened! "

Caillou has been laughed at, and he knows now that hens are not dangerous enemies, but still the Spring has a lot to do with it! I really do believe he would defy the hen. All

the same I go on, " Would you be afraid to go into a dark room at night ? "

He is truthful, and what is more, words create pictures in his mind. Hardly have I mentioned darkness before he sees it surrounding him. He confesses frankly, " Yes, I'd be frightened of *that*."

" Why, Caillou ? The room you are in now, *this* room, is the same day and night. You know there is nothing dangerous in it, no wild beasts, no holes to fall into, why should you mind ? "

" I don't know ; I should be frightened."

That is all he can say, and I don't insist on more, for I remember the terrors I endured at night when I was his age. I cannot remember their cause ; probably I never knew it. I place this conversation in a corner of my mind, and forget all about it until the day when Caillou is overwhelmed by a great despair.

In a cage in a corner of the children's room, a canary used to sing. *How* he sang, this bird with feathers as yellow as a wild tulip, *how* he sang ! As soon as he saw the sun, his throat swelled, his little beak

trembled a moment, as though he were going to stammer, and then he sang with all his might the songs he composed himself, and which were ever new.

It is a problem difficult to solve, why the nightingale should enlist the sympathies of the poets, and never the canary. It must be that the canary consents to sing in broad daylight, and in a cage. If so, of what ingratitude are they not guilty! I think, moreover, that the canary is to the nightingale what the Italian serenade is to the German lied. The bird of the old stone walls and leafy gardens has notes which go straight to your heart, you cannot tell why. The other seems only the voice of the sun, which laughs in the streets; but how good a thing that is! We owe the canary gratitude, and we give him none. Still there are many people who prefer light music, and the German lied does not give pleasure to all Frenchmen. I should like to know what we should think of the nightingale if he were a yellow bird in a cage, a street singer in broad daylight.

But Caillou simply loved his canary,

and thought its colour beautiful. He loved it because he thought he had the power to make it sing or keep silence, just by removing or putting the dark covering on its cage. Besides, the bird was his own, a great reason that, the strongest in the world.

When he was told that the canary was ill, he accepted the news as a part of his game, like all other events of his life. A sick canary is so much more interesting! He could not believe it would die, he had only the vaguest idea of death; for him, it was the definite stopping of all movement, the end of a being lost to the world.

Somebody said that it was the Spring that caused the canary's death, because it was the season when little birds cannot live without a mate, but whatever it was we shall never know the real truth of it. The fact is, he was found one morning lying on the floor of his cage, with stiff legs, and under his feathers a sort of white lump, which looked nasty, and was apparently caused by the illness of which he had died. That is what the cook said, at anyrate, and she knows everything!

I was quite sure that Caillou's grief would be bitter, and the expression of it heartrending. I was much moved by it myself. We must not look lightly on the sorrows of little ones. They are of shorter duration than our own, but they take entire hold of them because they meet with no obstacle. There is no shelter in their soul, not a single corner of them is at peace. Like the tornado in hot countries, children's griefs are short, but they lay waste.

I was not surprised, therefore, to see poor little Caillou cry as children always do cry, with loud wails. What I couldn't understand, was why he refused to be comforted. There was something in his grief that was not disinterested, something personal. There was fear in it, the fear of an evil fate which cannot be exorcised. He wept, " I've been naughty ! I've been naughty ! God is punishing me ! "

I took him in my arms, and while I tried to quiet him, and bring some peace to his soul, I felt that cruel curiosity which pertains to a man, and is one of his most detestable traits. I wanted to know what sin he had

committed. Yes! I really believed he had done something; I almost wished he had.

He had done nothing! and with profound astonishment I now beheld remorse in this six-year-old soul of his, remorse for imaginary sins that went back months and years . . . disobediences, little fibs which had never been found out, actions, insignificant in themselves, but of which he now wondered, "Was it naughty?"

I went to his mother and said, "Have you ever told him that God would punish him if he were naughty?"

"His nurse or I may have said it without thinking," she answered. "He was over excited and absolutely unbearable. You say those sort of things every day of your life."

"Hum!" said I; "it would be wiser not to say it again."

Caillou had revived one of the first, if not *the* first, of the religions of mankind; he believed that there was no effect without cause, which, of course, is true. Ignorant, however, of the laws of the universe, he, Caillou, imagined himself the centre of it, the cause of all that happened in that part

of the world open to his little eyes. The Greeks reasoned thus, when they sacrificed Iphigenia, in order to obtain favourable winds, and the savages reason in the same way when they believe that the spirit of a certain tree or animal, if offended, can take vengeance upon them.

And I understand too why Caillou is afraid of the darkness of night. He imagines it full of formidable things, because he does not see how it can possibly be empty. He's a savage!

I tried to reason with him, and show him what a little coward he was.

"Look here old man, I'm going to put the lamp out, and then light it again at once. Is there anything different in the room? Well then! it is exactly the same in the dark."

"I don't know for *certain*," answered Caillou. "I'm sure something was different."

They put a night-light near his bed, but he is still frightened, because of the shadows it makes on the ceiling, shadows that move! Now the fact is, Caillou feels himself to be surrounded by shadows, and it is because his

mind is beginning to work on its own account, and in the wrong direction, not by way of reasoning, nor even by feeling, but by the ideas he is forming, which are both vague and yet extremely insistent.

He has always firmly believed that the inanimate can become animate, or perhaps I should say he has not yet grasped the difference between the two. If it be possible for him to imagine during the daytime, that pieces of wood stuck in the paths of the Tuileries gardens are soldiers and horses and carriages, it is only a make-believe of which he is quite satisfied to be the dupe ; he would not be very astonished if these bits of wood were to change into real soldiers and horses and carriages, and he certainly wouldn't be afraid. But what changes take place in the night ? He doesn't know, and it is that which terrifies him.

The " nervy " phase through which Caillou is passing makes him suspicious even of human beings. Some of them seem really evil to him at first sight, because of their voice or their face.

He is disobedient, and tries to think of

naughty things to say, and he says them too, even to his mother; so the other day, she began to cry.

Caillou looked at her and laughed!

He was scolded very much and punished, but he didn't understand, and only became more wrapped up in his own thoughts, as though he had been unjustly treated after doing something for fun. He never for an instant thought his mother was *really* crying. She a "grown-up," a "power!" You see he cannot imagine that "grown-ups" and "powers" would deign to cry about the things that little children do; they are too detached, and too much above them.

Powers that really exist, and are too strong for him, others that don't exist but are created by his imagination; that is how he peoples his imaginary world.

Even supposing my own childish memories could help me at all to comprehend what is taking place in his mind, they are too confused, almost too mad, too out-of-the-ken of present-day humanity for me to mention them to Caillou's parents. So I must accept

what they say, which by the way, is perhaps true. Caillou is a little anæmic, the country air will do him good.

He is now in an old-world garden, just like gardens used to be three-quarters of a century ago. Seen through the lorgnette of romance, all the irregularities, as well as the "beauties" of nature grow there. Behind a grass plot, where five or six black pines are growing in a clump, a miniature mountain rises, bristling with elms and chestnut trees, and from one of the flanks of this peaked mountain a water-fall rushes down over a steep and rocky bed into a queerly shaped pool filled with last year's fallen leaves, which make its depths blacker and more mysterious. Further on is a little valley of perpetual shade, where the only things that grow are periwinkles with creeping tendrils, and very wet green mosses. Sometimes, under the trees, you see a statue, whose arms and head are all corroded by the rain, sometimes you see a rock, which looks like a crouching toad; and as every evening when night falls, a toad croaks in the garden, Caillou is firmly convinced that the live toad

lives in the stone one, who for some reason or the other is the live toad's father, or at anyrate the cause of him. In the daytime, he goes and watches for the living animal by the stone one, and is quite surprised, but very thankful also, that he doesn't come out, for he would be terrified of him.

Caillou has also discovered the ants; he has a real genius for seeing in detail all that is tiny. He puts his head down on the ground and watches, and the new acquaintances he has made in a very short time are a source of great astonishment to me. He knows that the ants that build cities in the grass, are black and tiny and very numerous, while in the cracks of the rocks there are two other kinds, big black ones, and little red ones that bite horribly. There are others again that build beautiful rooms between the rough-cast and the ashlar work of the wall that bounds the garden. These have black heads, black bellies, and brown bodies.

First of all I thought that Caillou would become very interested in Natural History, that he would begin to study the habits of the ants, but that was entirely a grown-

up person's idea. Caillou only watches one ant's nest now, the one that is hidden in the rock and cannot be seen. He brings it sugar, flies, and even other ants that these big black ones kill at once. By means of judicious coaxing I find out that these offerings are not disinterested! Caillou talks to these ants and implores their aid, he begs them to go at night and bite the cook whom he doesn't like!

Sometimes he confides this message for the ants to Steck, the fox-terrier, because he has always been a friend of his, and being an animal, Steck should act as a good interpreter with other animals. On these occasions, Caillou executes a kind of dance with the dog; he barks, and crawls on his hands and knees, sniffs and growls, and after having accomplished these rites, he holds a conversation with Steck, who is always happy when with Caillou. He too dances very hard and jumps on his hind legs.

One evening, a dish is placed on the table at which the big people look with some curiosity and a little repugnance. A horse butcher has opened a shop somewhere near,

and this is a horse steak. Caillou's eyes begin to shine, he begs for a piece, a *tiny* little piece. They give it him, and he eats his portion with a serious expression on his face.

" Is it good, Caillou ? "

He looks up astonished ; he hasn't noticed the taste ; he has eaten some horse, that is all, and is now absorbed in a dream from which nothing can rouse him.

Next day when we are out for a walk together, he suddenly releases my hand, and begins to run and run, as hard as he can go. I call out to him, and he shouts back, " I've eaten some horse ! you can't catch me now ! "

He feels he is thus establishing a mysterious relationship between himself and the outer world, he has now a sort of peculiar share in it. He does not observe things in order to learn, but all the time he is playing at magic.

On his return to Paris, his parents decide that they will ask an artist friend to model him in clay or wax, as a souvenir of his childish years, and now Caillou is taken every morning to the studio of Madame Marcelle Luze,

the sculptor. The studio is quite at the other end of Paris, higher up than the station Montparnasse, at the bottom of a street of studios, all built of just the same red brick, and exactly like toys arranged in neat rows in a box. . . . There is a creeper growing along the walls; Caillou doesn't know its name . . . he doesn't know the name of any plant . . . he doesn't know it is clematis, but he feels that it is very pretty. Indeed it is one of the prettiest things of which his baby mind can conceive. It does not seem quite real to him, not quite true, someone must have put it there, in that particular place, just for fun, just to see the daintiness of the plant, first climbing up, and then falling like a canopy over the passers-by. In winter, the canopy is full of white frothy seeds, and looks like the hair of a dear old lady. In spring, it is all green, so green that the very air is green to the level of one's eyes, and later again, it is covered with flowers. It is winter when Caillou first comes to the studio, and he goes under this pure canopy like a little shepherd in a Christmas crêche.

There is no bell to ring here ; you knock, and when Caillou comes with his mother or his nurse, Madam Luze herself nearly always opens the door to them, because she has been watching for Caillou through a tiny window with red curtains. She loves children, but has none of her own. Caillou is a very special favourite of hers, and the two kiss each other lovingly before beginning their work together. I say " together," because when Caillou is posing, innocent of clothing, and seated on a kind of platform that rotates on a wooden pivot, he feels convinced that he is really working. Madame Luze suggested this to him in order to make him keep still, and it was a very good idea, and had an almost unlooked for success.

" Caillou," she said to him, " other little boys come here like you do and pose on this platform. They are poor little boys, little Italians, workmen's children, and I give them money, because it is their way of earning their living ; it is their work, do you understand ? You are rich and I don't pay you, but you are working just like them,

and you are making me a present of your work. Thank you, Caillou ! "

Then Caillou, who cannot usually stay two minutes in the same place, Caillou, who, as a rule, scampers about to play his games, and moves about to alter them, who *must* always be moving, just as the birds must sing in the early mornings, Caillou the Meritorious, does his best to retain the immobility of a real professional model ; he " holds the pose ! " He even holds it too well, because he is ignorant of the little makeshifts and tricks of the trade. He sets all his muscles, instead of keeping only certain muscles rigid, he makes himself very tired, and begins to look very unhappy . . . though noble. Madame Luze is not pitiless ; she lifts him up in her arms, and puts him down on the floor, slips a little furred dressing gown over him, and says, " Now run and play, do whatever you like, I'm sure you've earned it."

Naturally the first thing Caillou wants to do, is to play with clay like Madame Luze. He has as much clay as he likes, and his mother watches him with loving

admiration, convinced that he has a natural aptitude for art.

He has no particular aptitude, however, or at anyrate, it is not yet perceptible. What is most singular, is that he uses the clay to make just the very things that cannot possibly be made with it, gardens, for instance, flanked with trees. A tree made with clay is a sheer impossibility! The trunk isn't so bad, but the branches and the foliage are a source of the gravest disappointment, in spite of the array of matches which he has been taught to use for the former. It is the same with the roofs of houses, and the bridges he throws across imaginary rivers. It is no good saying to him, "Make old men, Caillou, make old men and animals," he persists in his disappointing enterprise, and even seems to derive great satisfaction from it. Of course he has never thought of the shape of old men or animals, he has only noticed their movements, but I think the chief reason that he does not model them is that he would think it absolutely absurd to try to do so, when it is so much more amusing to

create a huge centre, in which he can see scores of things in imagination.

However, Madame Luze calls him again to the platform, to resume work. Unconsciously, but most decidedly, Caillou likes watching her . . . she is "doing things," you see. All action attracts him, and he feels she is happy in her work. Sometimes he accompanies her with a sort of soft cooing sound, a song without begining or end, just as though he could not speak, as in the first days of his existence, when he was drunk with milk.

The sculptor raises her arm, bites her lips, moves away, then comes nearer. She is delighted, then impatient, enthusiastic, then anxious. Caillou is quite interested watching her movements, but as he wants to copy them, posing worries him.

At last one day he takes a look at the effigy that is emerging from chaos, and growing distinct, and suddenly grasps the meaning of the whole affair. They have said to him dozens of times: "*You* are being made, Caillou, it is *you*," but he didn't quite know what they meant; now, however, he is

enlightened. Madame Luze has modelled a little boy called Caillou, and it is much more interesting, much truer than a painting or a photograph, because it has depth and bulk as it were, and also because it is exactly his size; it is Caillou as he sees himself, and nothing could possibly be more extraordinary or more mysterious to him. At his side a little Caillou is growing out of clay, a Caillou that never moves, that is the only difference; and as Caillou himself has so often been told to "Keep still, Caillou!" he is inclined to regard this difference as a mark of the other Caillou's superiority.

Madame Luze's face is wearing a serious and disappointed look, just at the very moment when Caillou is most happy. She is no longer gay, her gestures do not look as if she were dancing, her arms fall to her sides and she stops working a moment. The head, the head of this little round body, which looks so tender and so alive, the head, with the baby mouth and smiling eyes, is not as it should be on the slender shoulders, it would be much better otherwise placed.

Madame Luze never hesitates when she

isn't satisfied. She takes a very thin and hard piece of iron wire, straightens it out between her two hands, like this, brings it near the head of the statue, and draws it towards her, and behold in the twinkling of an eye, the statue is headless !

Madame Luze holds the head in her two hands, and looks at it coldly and pitilessly.

Suddenly she hears a dreadful and unaccustomed sound ! It is Caillou, who has jumped down from the platform all by himself—a thing he has never yet dared to do, and has rushed terrified, to the other end of the studio. He is frightened, indignant, hurt, he screams, he stamps, he looks at Madame Luze as at a powerful and ferocious enemy !

She cannot understand what on earth is the matter, and goes toward him, wondering what possesses him. But Caillou escapes her, Caillou runs away from her, he feels he would be in awful danger were she to touch him. At last he explains, weeping bitter tears, " You've cut my head off ! you've cut my head off ! "

" No I haven't, Caillou ! Feel your own

head ! you see it's still there ! What a silly little fellow you are ! "

Caillou feels his head ! Nothing has happened to it, that's absolutely certain, but he is by no means consoled.

" Of course I knew," says he, " You didn't do anything to this one, but the other head was mine, and you've cut it off ! "

He has been playing at magic again. His halting and magnificent logic has gone back to the days when a real soul lived in the images of all beings, by reason of their having been made with the intention of imitating these same beings. He has gone back to the time when, if you insulted an effigy, you insulted the living model of the effigy. Madame Luze has cast a spell on Caillou, without in any way wishing to, and he now looks at her with eyes of hatred and dread.

CHAPTER XIV

THE OPERATION

CAILLOU is a year older now, and not so plump as he used to be. Almost imperceptibly Nature has stolen away that delicious roundness that belongs to babyhood, and by some mysterious process has changed it into bone and muscle. His body is shaping itself, is becoming "debourré," as the country people say. He is taller, and very proud of the fact that his head now reaches the top of my writing table.

Quite a short time after his return to Paris he grows suddenly moody; almost grumpy in fact. He, who generally greets the new day with so much joy and happy laughter, who chatters unceasingly the moment he awakes, and demands loudly to be dressed at once, has taken a sudden

liking to lying in bed and stretching out his restless little limbs with lazy enjoyment.

His mother puts it down to his rapid growth, saying that it is only natural he should feel tired.

The other day, however, as soon as he was up and dressed and just about to start on his milk and bread and butter, he burst into bitter tears for no reason whatever. No reason did I say? There is always some reason for children's tears. All we can do is to say we do not understand it. I think Caillou was feeling that life was not worth living, and he had hitherto found it such a glorious thing. Then just as suddenly he was very sick. Perhaps you have noticed with what singular facility children exercise this function. No doubt, it is a relic of the precious automatism of their digestive organs dating from the days when as yet they were but pink and white bundles of humanity gorged with milk. And, to me, children seem very pathetic at such times, because their dawning reason tells them there is something wrong; they indignantly realise that things should not happen that

way. They feel ridiculous and humiliated, and also are afraid of being scolded.

Of course, no one dreamed of scolding Caillou. When a child "feels sick" his parents anxiously question whether it be only a slight disorder, or something far more serious . . . so many dreadful illnesses begin that way, typhoid fever, appendicitis. . . . Questioned, Caillou insists that he has a headache. Unfortunately, as I have already pointed out, the information he is able to give as to the working of his little inside is deceptive and vague in the extreme. So far as he is concerned all his body is "un ventre," and if his tooth aches he announces in just the same way that he has a headache. However, by asking definite questions, "tell me, does it hurt here, or here, or there?" at last they discover that his throat is sore.

Renewed fears! One can never tell how a sore throat may develop! But the doctor is reassuring—it is only that his tonsils are enlarged, that is all. The only thing is, says the doctor, he is sure to have it again, perhaps two or three times during the winter

It would be much wiser to have done with it and cut his tonsils at once, that is, in about a fortnight.

So the operation has been decided upon, but nothing is said to Caillou. Of course, he needn't know, need he ? It is much easier to take him unawares. So in the meanwhile they do their best to make him better ; he has to gargle and be painted with alum, and also his temperature is taken with unfailing regularity, because he is inclined to be feverish.

The most delightful feature of the whole thing is the condescending way in which Caillou permits them to fuss over him. You see he is no longer the frolicing, amusing, beloved little child, but the most important person in the house. Every one looks at him anxiously, and so he is filled with an immense regard for himself. On the other hand, he simply continues the course of study suitable to one of his years, that is, he enlarges his vocabulary. When any one comes up to his little bed and says, " How are you, Caillou ? " he never answers, " I'm better," or " I'm worse," but announces importantly, " Oh, I'm 36.9."

You see, he has seen the doctor and his mother take his temperature, and report on it either anxiously or the reverse, as the case may be, but always with a certain amount of emphasis, and his imitative instinct derives a vast amount of satisfaction from the repetition of these words which he does not in the least understand. He is talking like the grown-ups, who listen to him and say with much interest, " 36.9 ? Come, Caillou, that's not so bad ! " " Oh, yes," he deigns reply, " it's not bad."

He submits, for the same reason, to all the gargling and painting of his throat. Of course, it isn't pleasant, but it fills him with innocent pride, for these small torments concentrate all the attention upon himself. So truly is this the reason of his submissiveness that as soon as his temperature is normal and he is allowed to get up again the same treatment becomes intolerable, for they only go on doing it now he is quite well, so as to make sure, and without paying much attention to him. They aren't playing a fair game, and it makes him angry. He lets them know it, too, so much so that they

make use of their deeper knowledge of the workings of his mind, and 24 hours before the operation is to take place they say he is worse again, and put him to bed. They surround him with every care, and remorsefully resume the bathing and poulticing, so that when the doctor arrives Caillou firmly believes he is only going to paint his throat again.

"We are going to look further down today, Caillou, so we will put a bandage over your eyes."

These two phrases have not the least connection with one another, but they *look* like an explanation, and, like men and women, children desire no more.

"Now open your mouth wide, let me see your throat."

He obeys at once, and the doctor takes from its case the instrument he is about to use; surely one of the most hideously alarming known to surgery. It looks like a long pair of scissors, ending in a kind of fork and guillotine. The fork is to transfix the tonsils and the guillotine to cut them off.

Caillou, the unsuspecting, feels the shock

of a sudden burning pain, but he cannot speak or scream because he is choking. Just a moment, only one, in which to gargle painfully, and it's all over. Out comes the tonsil on the end of the fork. Now it has to be done all over again, because there are two of them. Doctors often stop short at the first one, however. I don't think many beheaded people would agree to having their heads cut off twice running, supposing they could come to life again after the first execution. Little patients like Caillou are just as reluctant; they struggle, their throats contract, and the rest of the torture has to be postponed until later—much later.

Fortunately, Caillou is not like them—not that he is brave—oh, no—he is simply biassed. His eyes are still bound, and he does not know what is going on. He is in pain, but thinks they have made a mistake in painting his throat; and to strengthen this conviction of his, the doctor tells him to gargle again, and again he obeys.

"It hurts, Caillou, but it will soon be all over. Open your mouth, and it will all go away."

Again the same unquestioning obedience; he has such implicit faith in them, and submits so trustingly to the influence of their words. The pain is less acute this time, because there is more room for the instrument now only one tonsil is left.

It is really all over at last, but there are yet to follow all the ugly miseries which follow on the performance of such an operation. The bleeding makes him sleepy and giddy, but he may not go to sleep because it must be stopped.

"Don't talk, Caillou, you mustn't, but we will talk to you instead."

And they talk and talk to him, about anything and everything. The bandage has been removed, and his beautiful brown eyes follow them wherever they go, and watch their every gesture. He is trying to amuse himself, for that is the aim of his life when he is not either eating or sleeping. Then a servant comes in with a tin pail in her hand —a huge impressive pail. "Here's your ice, Caillou, the ice we promised if you were very good."

The ice is really given him to help stop

the bleeding, and the idea is both clever and full of tender wile. You see, it is a dainty so rarely enjoyed by him, because he never sits up to dinner when there are guests invited and ices to be had; he is always in bed and asleep at that time.

And here it is confronting him. He can think of nothing else, and now and then he pretends to dip a little spoon into the precious pail. They come to him and put on his tongue a morsel of the pink snow, and he closes his eyes in silent enjoyment of it. It is his ice, his property. He enjoys looking at it there at the foot of his bed far more than feeling it melt bit by bit in his hot mouth; even when his eyes are shut he sees it before him, and so he is entirely happy.

In a very few days he is well again. When they say to him, "Did it hurt you very much, Caillou?" he answers in all sincerity, "Hurt me! When?" He has forgotten it already, and is, as always, absorbed in the present.

Now, however, he knows quite well what happened, for the operation and the instruments of torture are described to all the

friends, relations and acquaintances who come to the house, and Caillou is delighted at engrossing the general attention. He would like to repeat those moments of his life which shall henceforth shine out with dazzling splendour.

The other day I heard him say to Lucile, " We'll play operations. I'll be the doctor. Look here, I've got a dessert fork."

And they had to take the fork away from him.

CHAPTER XV

THE DAWN OF THE UNGRATEFUL AGE (L'ÂGE INGRAT)

I BELIEVE I have already told you that every year, when Caillou and his people go to the country, they stay with Caillou's uncle. Until now, you have always heard about Caillou ; he has almost entirely monopolised your attention, and, without doubt, you only know his uncle very slightly.

For my part, I almost ignored him for many years ; I looked upon him as an eccentric and amusing old bachelor, who played tricks almost to excess upon the child I loved : for instance, if you remember, tricks like " the horse's egg."

It requires time, and you must have lived a long while, in order to realise the fact that every man and every woman lives a secret life that makes them interesting, lovable

and worthy of respect, or repulsive and meriting keen dislike.

In order to understand others, you must have meditated upon many things, and principally upon yourself; and even that hardly ever amounts to much in ordinary life. Either because it is more convenient to do so, or because you are lazy, because you have a need for them, or because you have none, you go on taking the human shadows you meet with for the beings they wish to represent. Sometimes in a flash you see that there is "something else," but you wilfully cover your eyes, because if you troubled yourself about the souls of others your own might be lost, or might cease to strive.

Caillou's uncle lives in the country nearly all the year round. He only comes to Paris by chance, and sometimes does not even let anyone know that he is coming.

He is rather an old man, over sixty, and at first sight people are inclined to put him down as "an original," and, "like all old bachelors," a somewhat selfish one, too. These qualifications can be obtained at the very lowest price!

Uncle Jules is "an original" because, in spite of the fact that he is very well supplied with money, he dresses badly, and seems to bestow a particular care on this propensity. In other words, he suits his clothes to his taste, and always wears them all out of shape in exactly the same way.

He is an "original" because he never pays any calls, and that when he hears a lady singing in the drawing-room the only opinion he will express is, "How tiring you must find it!"

He is an "original" because, like an old maid, he keeps a canary, and likes to hear it sing; also because he has had the same cook for twenty years, as she is an excellent one—a fact that he recognises and talks about.

He is considered selfish because for three-quarters of the year he lives alone, and a priori, in the world's opinion, a man who lives alone must be selfish.

Anyhow, it is sufficient. He is catalogued!

The matter is much more complicated than it seems to be on the surface; all things

are, however, more complicated than they appear to be. It is really curious to see how this stout elderly man, with freckles all over his hands, bags under his eyes, and shapeless shoes—" gouty " shoes !—loves the society of some young women. He doesn't seek them out, and almost appears to be frightened of them ; but once they have broken the ice, Uncle Jules manifests an intense appreciation of them which is all the more extraordinary that it is disinterested. Sometimes when with them he seems to be a mute looker on, and appears almost bored by them, but in a very little while his attention returns, and he listens again with his hands spread out on his knees.

On the other hand, another time he joins in conversation in no way intended for his age nor sex. He hears matters of dress discussed, and even goes so far as to express heartfelt convictions upon so frivolous a topic ; and you discover that he owns a real " vocabulary " of dress—a vocabulary which changes from year to year, maybe from month to month. If you express astonishment at this, he retorts that he

doesn't find it more difficult nor more ridiculous than knowing the names of flowers, and being, by the way, a great gardener, he knows the names of all flowers.

Further, when discussing and criticising female beauty and all that appertains thereto, he makes use of unique terms which are his own particular property, and which he has culled from classifications of very different objects; they are the expressions of a solitary, a savage, or a tiller of the soil. This has the effect of fascinating and surprising the women. He is either loved as an old and safe "platonic" friend, or disdained as a horrid old creature.

The strangest thing is that no woman who has ever gained the affection of Uncle Jules has ever lost it; some of them who, having undergone his scrutiny two or three times, and whom he has never again seen, are still fresh in his memory, and he continually speaks of them. But he recollects them in much the same way as a farmer remembers a year in which there has been a tremendous gathering of apples, a quantity of grapes, or luxuriant crops. He knows the date upon

which he met them, and the place of their meeting, the sound of their voice, and the special characteristics of their graciousness or beauty; he asks for news of them, and some of them write to him.

The older he gets the more he seems to feel the need of returning to the submission and the deference, and also to the childishness of his early years. He would like to live in a family of his own, and all domestic details interest him. In his own idea he is much inferior to his sister who, though younger than he, has had children.

To have had children seems to him an extraordinary and affecting thing, and this deviation of the paternal instinct in him resolves itself into the instinct for play. Now a child does not play perpetually with dolls, and Uncle Jules would really not have the least idea of how to bring up Caillou, how to feed him, and how to correct him. He only wants to see the boy from time to time, and to play at loving him, and at these times he loves him to distraction and childishly.

His early childhood comes back to him:

that is why he plays elder-brother tricks on Caillou, and Caillou plays him tricks which make him laugh to tears. But the game mustn't last too long, for he is old, and this family life, this young life which he adores, is only a spectacle for him, and however much one may enjoy a spectacle, one would not like it to last too long.

After a few weeks, or a few days, maybe, Uncle Jules feels, without knowing it himself, that he needs to be alone again, to go hunting and fishing, and walking with his dog once more ; to hear his bird sing in its cage, and to talk again with his old cook.

Nevertheless, he talks to Caillou about his mother, about all that interests Caillou. His age leads him to prefer the past to the present, and even to fear the future. That is what he calls " loving his own people " (*aimer les siens*), and, as people say, perhaps he is selfish in that one particular.

When he is left alone with his dog and canary and cook, it pleases him to remember that Caillou loves them. He will not confess to himself what is really the truth, that it is just the other way about, and that he

loves Caillou for having deepened the interest that he feels in these familiar creatures, and for having increased their value in his eyes by throwing a new light on them and on their actions. Besides, neither Caillou nor his mother are ever in the way ; Caillou's mother knows her brother well, and respects his habits.

Until this time Caillou has always been a good little chap, and has gone everywhere with his old big friend. The old big friend imagines that it will ever be thus, and is happy in the rather tepid kind of way which just suits him. If he felt more, he would be disconcerted and uncomfortable. He has reached an age when all the stomach requires is vegetables and slops, and it is the same with regard to his mind.

When you come to think of it, it really isn't natural that Uncle Jules should be like this. A lady of whom he is very fond said one day that the unhappiness and loneliness of his life were probably caused by some one having spoiled it at the outset. Anyhow, he is not ending his life happily, but sadly, like nearly all old bachelors.

Caillou's mother very probably knows what this bad beginning was, but she is very discreet in this respect. I have never been able to make up my mind whether he loves children instinctively, and, like everybody else, ought to have some, or whether there is a child somewhere who is his, whom he cannot, and never will, see. However, very probably he would never be disinterested enough to watch a child develop ; he loves children most certainly, but he does not understand them.

Uncle Jules is very kind, but he is " outside " everything, more so than even he himself realises. In the autumn he wants to be by himself, with nobody near him, and to have his legs comfortably stretched out in front of the first fires. It isn't very lively, but then nothing would make him lively. He has seen the Spectre ! Truly he had been told that it would come !

Its coming is foretold to all men from the very first days of their childhood, and they never believe it. People really, firmly and absolutely believe only in what they themselves have experienced, or, at any rate,

they must have a tiny taste of personal experience before they believe.

Once, in a madhouse, I saw a poor fellow who thought himself immortal. The strangest thing about it was that he had been a doctor, and no one, I am sure, could have witnessed the death of more people than he. That had nothing to do with it. He would say, "Have I ever been dead?" "No, I haven't." "Can I be sure I shall die, then?" "I shall never die!"

You remind me that he was mad! But what about yourself? When you are young, do you ever realise that you will grow old? It is true! You see people ageing all around you, you know that people grow old, that it is an inevitable law, and, nevertheless, having no experience of it yourself, not having the power to know beforehand *how* you will grow old, you do not realise it. If you dared, you would confess to a certain scepticism! But one day the Spectre of Old Age appears, and takes you by surprise.

It has not treated you brutally, however; you can reproach it with nothing. It has not torn out your hair, or broken your teeth.

You are just the same in appearance, and you will remember that it has several times already made you the sign it makes to you to-day, only you did not understand it.

Were you losing your appetite, you were content to pride yourself upon a newly-acquired virtue, Sobriety! Were you more sensitive to cold, you frankly applauded your prudence! Did you show less enthusiasm at the unexpected newness of certain facts and aspects of life, or less anger and indignation, you called the coldness Wisdom!

But something *should* have warned you. The lessening of the conscious joy you felt in seeing the seasons renew themselves year by year, in seeing the birth of one leaf on a tree, a green living happy leaf, which loves the wind and rain and sun; in seeing a fruit grow red or golden, the tips of the trees yellowing, or the first snow falling—the snow which makes you say, "How lovely! Let's hasten out that we may walk over it!"

And lo and behold! these tremendous events leave you cold! You should have quivered with anxiety! You didn't even think about it!

Then, suddenly, you have a slight illness—nothing much; it may be that a vehicle brushes against you in the street, and bruises a muscle, or you have a cough, or a touch of fever (the souvenir of old travels); any of these things have happened time and time again. Ah! how you *felt* them, those youthful maladies! If only you could feel with the same intensity again!

How exhausted and overwhelmed you were—first burning, then icy cold; and how you struggled against it! The illness appeared like a ridiculous accident to you—like a fleeting irregularity, a sort of injustice that would only last a moment; and you were not wrong, it didn't last long. Afterwards you were just the same again, often stronger than before, as though purified, cleansed and strengthened. You were leaner, more vigorous. Besides, how could any one have ever imagined for a moment that it would be otherwise! A young man must go through one of those terrible illnesses which never forgive, and which age him before his time, to be able to say, "Never again shall I be as I was!" You were only

indignant at having to stop for a few minutes on your way.

Truth to tell, these youthful maladies are of the same type as toothache, atrociously painful, irritating past endurance, and at the same time humiliating, because you realise with all your reason, and with all your instinct, that they are of no importance whatsoever. Momentarily, you feel yourself beaten, but you refuse to own yourself beaten, and as soon as you can get out again you say to yourself, " It wasn't true ! Here I am ! Yes, you may look at me ; I'm just the same ! "

But this last time, the Spectre of Old Age came right up to your door. It opened the door, and you saw its hideous face. Then it went away at once, but you know it is on the stairs, and will remain there always now.

You realise this because you are not at all angry this time at the sudden attack. You are in a condition of delightful cowardice, and meekly submit to be nursed. There is a diminution of the vital forces, which you know will be permanent. You feel all these things, and what is more serious

than all the rest put together is that you are not at all astonished at the length of time you are ill. You put up with it. The falling off of the need for mental activity is so great that for the first time you are not surprised at finding yourself doing nothing. And that is all the more astounding because you had said, " I've got to keep still ! What a lot of work I shall get through ! "

The day passes ; you find it gone, useless, unoccupied, and happy. It seems almost as though it never had been. It seems almost as though you felt yourself immortal, just at the moment when you have found out that you are in the great stream which carries all before it, and which flows quicker now as it nears its end, that solemn boundless ocean, where no human creature is known by name !

But all the same, all the same, it is not without its joys. In the years of your strength you think you can live alone. Men and women appear to you as the playthings and products of your own power, and if they leave you to go another way, you are first angry at their incomprehensible in-

gratitude, and then you forget them. But as soon as Nature has made you that mysterious sign, you realise with a delicious resignation that these human beings exist of themselves, that they are outside of you, and will perhaps continue long after you have ceased to exist.

So you are deeply grateful for all that they give, even without knowing it you think them generous. And now you learn the art of tasting the joy of the present moment. You take leave of it regretfully, and perfect yourself in the art of prolonging it. You had watched it come, you watch it go. The angle at which you contemplate the universe is changed. In vain is it that only a few years ago your reason convinced you that the space you occupied in the world was less than that occupied by an ant on a mountain ; your intelligence truly told you so, but you did not believe it. To-day you feel it as you do heat and cold, without any effort, without bringing your will into play in the very least degree.

I experienced the same feeling—it is a feeling, not an argument, you know—after

my first voyage round the world. I had a physical conviction that the earth was round, and that I should never be able henceforth to conceive otherwise of it. I had been told, of course, that it was round, but I only consented to admit as much, and then straightway forgot all about it. There is a great difference between the two ways of thinking.

It is a very curious fact that this new state of mind should bring with it no diminution in the idea you have formed of your own importance. You seem now to experience a sense of absolute security. I do not know how you have come to realise that every action is followed by its own result, and this fact is borne in upon you just at the very moment when you are first aware of a certain indifference to the delights of action.

You then proceed to cherish a certain contempt for " style." You lose the bashfulness that overwhelmed you each time you had to do some thing or express some thought, because you feared that there was something better in the way of action or thought. And now there is only one step to take, and you

take it; you walk and express yourself without thinking *how* you do either. You are *yourself* for the first time in all your life.

And is that what people would call growing old? Then should you bless fate, and get accustomed to things!

Uncle Jules has seen the Spectre, and is getting accustomed to things. . . .

This year, when Caillou came to stay with Uncle Jules, he found him waiting for him among his late roses and ripening fruit, with his dog, his canary singing in its cage, and his precious cook! And Uncle Jules, Uncle Jules himself, cried out, "But, Caillou, you are not a bit the same!"

It made Uncle Jules feel sad, because old folk don't like the people and things around them to change, it makes them feel still older; what is more, Uncle Jules did not realise how true his words were.

Two things have happened to Caillou; he is no longer a child, but a little man, a little male animal, over seven; and he can read! So there it is! He has nothing in common with the Caillou we have known

hitherto. All the grace and soft plumpness, all the roundness of babyhood, have now disappeared. He has long, thin hands, already quite strong, and lean but muscular arms, on a frail, slight body.

"You can count his ribs," says his mother, who is inclined to be over-anxious. But then his body is so supple that he can do anything he pleases with it—anything he pleases being, generally, a hundred monkey-tricks a minute. His eyes are bright rather than loving, and his hair is cropped short. The new teeth have not yet filled in all the spaces left by the old ones, a circumstance which by no means improves his beauty! His feet are out of all proportion, they have grown quicker than the rest of him. And to sum up, as I have already told you, he has learned to read!

Alas! He *had* to be taught to read! But now, a world made by men, and specially by those who write for the young, has replaced the world that his little simple soul believed in. Dreams too vast, passionate and feverish imaginings, make him sick of reality at all times, and a kind of per-

nicious mental fatigue augments all this disorder.

He will kneel for two or three hours at a stretch in front of a picture-book placed on a chair, "Vingt mille lieues sous les mers," or "L'Ile Mysterieuse," or "Le bon petit Diable," and he comes away from them with dreamy eyes, a whirling brain, and a strange new sulkiness pervading his features. He literally does not know where he is, and you can't get a word out of him

He will not tell you his thoughts nowadays. They have become too complicated, and in his mind there are deep, hidden recesses and a keen perception of ridicule. He is afraid of being laughed at, and dare not tell anyone—not anyone, not even his mother—that he imagines himself first "a child celebrity," and then the unhappy offspring of cruel parents, or just a bad scamp, the author of heroic deeds. So in turn he becomes—but only for himself alone—Pic de la Mirandole, Pascal inventing Geometry, Romain Kallin, or le Bon petit Diable!

He kills frogs like Pic de la Mirandole in order to dissect them, and, in truth, he kills

them very cruelly, because he does not know any better, but he cannot discover anything new in these disjointed members and scattered organs.

Then he manufactures powder with bits of charcoal and flower of sulphur sneaked from the gardener, and saltpetre scraped off the stable doors. It is very bad powder, but it fuses all the same, singes off his eyebrows, and starts a small fire in the barn of the old house. He is very proud of this achievement, especially as he is severely punished for it.

Souvenirs of Romain Kallin intervene: Caillou is a victim full of a genius which no one will recognise, and nobody loves him! So he climbs into a tree because that "is in a book too," and exults in a pride which is tearful, sentimental, and also delightful. As soon as his tears have finished flowing, odds and ends of song come to his memory, for he hasn't a bad ear, and he applies them to his own situation, or to the woes of imaginary young victims who have become, not only himself, but many other selves!

"Si vous n'avez rien à me dire" seems to him particularly touching, and therefore

the fitting song for a poor unjustly treated youngster. There is also the Allegretto from Beethoven's Symphony in A, which he can remember perfectly, and which seems to him like the personal and splendidly sorrowful cry of his own mental misery. As for "Gloire eternelle de nos Aieux," he is quite convinced, with a mixture of terror and enthusiasm, that it is the savage song of the brigands returning laden with the fruit of their guilty but fascinating expeditions, to the cavern, where the product of the brain of Abbé Schmidt, young Henri, is held prisoner!

When he is really too naughty for anything, they put him in a room which has a wood fire burning there, because this year the Autumn is rather cold. Caillou does not mind in the least! He throws bridges made of splinters of wood between two flaming logs, and imagines he sees armies meeting and fighting, falling on each other with tremendous blows, in the changing lights cast by the scraps of wood before they burn out. He is absolutely happy, and when you come to fetch him, he looks

as if he would like to bite you! You are disturbing him!

He bears a grudge against everybody, and that seems to him to justify the tricks he plays on his so-called persecutors. Uncle Jules is the one who finds the least favour in his eyes, because he is the host, the one of whom they say, "Be careful! Your Uncle will not like that!"

He is already in possession of a dangerously good memory, and he has kept an exact record in his mind of all that he has heard the elder people say about his Uncle's fads and follies.

He looks upon him as a tyrant, and respects him no longer. He thinks he has no right to order him about, as he is not *really* his master by any ties of blood! Why should one accept several masters! Caillou refuses to be a slave! That is why he gives vent to his instinct of greed and pillage, and devours every day, in their greenest babyhood, Uncle Jule's apples and pears, the cherished hopes of a future harvest. As he flings the débris contemptuously about the garden paths, it is not difficult to trace the crime!

" Now speak the truth, Caillou, you climb the trees, and eat the fruit ? "

" Yes," says Caillou, " I do ; I climb to the very top of the trees ! "

He confesses proudly, considering that here at last is an exploit worthy of his own esteem, and of honourable mention in the books that he feeds upon.

He is scolded and punished, and made to promise, " You will not touch any more apples, Caillou ? Promise ! "

" I won't pick any," says Caillou, sulkily.

" Nor pears, nor peaches ! "

Caillou promises anew. He is still in possession of this much of his former honesty, he keeps his word.

The next day, the peach, pear, and apple trees present a hideous sight, a sight without precedent in the annals of horticulture ! Caillou has not " picked " ; there is no doubt about that ! But he hadn't been forbidden to climb the trees, so he has climbed them just the same, and has eaten as much fruit as he can possibly hold, leaving the cores still on the trees.

The trees are outraged, and Caillou con-

gratulates himself on having both kept his word, and on acquiring the certitude that his name would be handed down to posterity, for he is greedy of any fame, even of the most detestable kind !

Next morning Uncle Jules goes shooting. He likes the sport, and he feels an absolute need of getting away as often as possible from this house, which, though his own, is now filled with such unpleasant disturbances, and so many domestic dramas.

He whistles to his dog, and Caillou asks, with an innocent air, " Are you going out, Uncle ? "

As soon as the dog sees Caillou, it starts with terror, and makes off, rushes to the other end of the country to escape its ' persecutor ' !

For Caillou is his persecutor ! To satisfy his savage instincts which have been developed by what he has been reading, Caillou has made of him a lion sometimes, or a bear, or wolf. He has caught him in traps, and killed him in bloody fights, and then, like another victorious Robinson Crusoe, he has brought him home to his cave. He has dragged him

over the rough gravel with his four paws tied together, a quivering corpse! So the good old dog has changed into a poor frightened beast who has no trust in man's goodness, in man, who can be cruel even when you do nothing to hurt him!

Caillou could not treat Jupiter the cat like that, because Jupiter has claws! But he makes use of him in his own way. By lifting him up thirty times a day to a level with the canary's cage, he turns him into a terrible tiger. And the canary, with beating heart, and ruffled feathers, flings himself against the bars of his cage, terrified at the sight of his hereditary enemy. In trying to get out, he breaks his beak, hurts his feet, and can neither eat nor drink.

Thus does Caillou make "experiments," and upset Uncle Jules's peaceful, well-ordered, and solemn household. And the more he is reproved, scolded, and punished, the more he looks upon himself as the victim of the powers that be, the more does he become imbued with the thought that he is not like other people (this is gleaned from a literature which makes game of him), that he has a perfect

right to revenge himself, that he does not take sufficient revenge, and that his misfortunes are well worthy of immortality!

He has become a romanticist, and, like all romanticists, it is impossible to get at him, even through his feelings. The hardness of which he is the victim renders all rebellious acts legitimate in his eyes.

"Think of the Passion of Jesus Christ," said his mother imprudently to him one day.

"That only lasted three days," answered Caillou. "People have been making *me* miserable for three years!"

For three years he had been the happiest little boy in the world, but he would think it much beneath his dignity to own to it. The only thing to be done is to take him home, the master of the house cannot stand any more.

His guests having at last departed, Uncle Jules breathes once more, but his precious cook comes to him, folding up her apron! "I won't stay any longer in this house," she remarks. "No one has any respect for me. Master Caillou stuffed my bed full of snails before he went away!"

She adds, "I must also tell Monsieur that his canary is dead."

"Dead!" says Uncle Jules. "What of?"

"How should I know? Fright, I should think."

Thus the poor man is left alone in his ruined home, without his cook, his dog, or his canary! Youth, like a passion, has traversed the old house, and has left nothing but ruin behind it!

Uncle Jules feels very old and weary, and incapable of adapting himself to younger people. He thinks bitterly that he will never forgive Caillou. Truly he must be very old if he has forgotten the "ungrateful age" (l'âge ingrat) of boyhood, when, out of sheer insubordination, and also to gain a knowledge of their own personality, little boys are up in arms against a world, of which they have formed a conception as intolerable as it is false.

Caillou's mother is in despair. In spite of all the wisdom and all the experience they have managed to acquire, mothers one and all hug the same illusion. They think that

their little one will always remain little. And now Caillou seems to have turned into a sort of monster! She contemplates all sorts of plans, even to sending him to a boarding-school, to learn discipline and respect, and to be impressed with the fact that he must "do like other people."

I am a witness of her anguish, but I cannot share it, because I know that Caillou is really just the same Caillou, and I would not have him changed under the pretext of correcting him.

"Believe me," I say to her, "I harbour no resentment against the masters of my youth, but at the same time, I know that I left their hands fashioned in so strange and extraordinary a manner that it took me years to find myself. And those years were lost ones. . . . Once there was a duckling——"

"That's make-up!"

"Maybe. But I assure you it's about a real duck, who had a great misfortune during the floods. First of all, the duck was only an egg, which is, of course, quite natural. M. Giscard, a cooper, who lived in the Rue des Ursins, behind Notre Dame, had chosen

it out of a jar, when he was spending a day in the country with his friend, a cow-keeper.

"'What in the world is this?' he asked.

"You see, this egg was bigger than the others, and when you held it up to the light it looked green, while the others looked pink.

"'That?' said the cow-keeper; 'It's a duck's egg.'

"So M. Giscard asked if he might have it, remarking that, as he kept fowls, he would set it and get it hatched. This chain of circumstances brought about the birth of the duck in the Rue des Ursins. When the shell broke, he came out oblong in shape, and he cuddled up under the wings of the old hen, his little body covered with yellow down, the precursor of feathers.

"Altogether he was very like the chickens, his foster-brothers, except for his beak and feet, which were larger, and his body which was still of the same shape as the egg from which he had just emerged. Then as his plumage grew, he became a real duck, quite satisfied with his lot and his surroundings, for he had plenty of tasty and varied

food—bread crumbs, odd bits of fat, and even the insides of poultry, just as Mme. Giscard threw them out, and which the duck, in his ignorance of what they were, devoured.

"Beyond the yard which served as a work place, past the old gate studded with enormous diamond-headed nails, stretched a vast region which, likewise, contained good things to eat.

"It was the Rue des Ursins itself—irregular, tortuous, narrowed to a point at one end, and somewhat resembling a kind of long drain-pipe. It contained the ruins of an old chapel, whose loose stones supplied worms, insects and flies to the hungry in summer.

"One of the ends of the street opened on to the Rue de la Concorde, which leads to an enormous edifice reaching far into the sky, with two towers and a steeple much frequented by rooks. At the other end is a wide flat space enclosed by a stone wall.

"The edifice is called 'Notre Dame,' and the space enclosed by the wall is called the 'quaie.' At certain hours in the day this enclosure is almost empty; you can venture

out there, and you will find scraps of chewed orange, bits of meat, a thousand débris, which taste deliciously. But the little band of chickens and the duck never went towards the quaie.

" ' What is there at this end ? ' asked the duck, thirsting for information, one day.

" ' Water ! ' answered the old hen.

" Her voice was so full of horror that the duck said no more. He knew now that water was an evil thing.

" He was very curious to find out what M. Giscard and his workmen did. All day long their hard wooden hammers and their shining adzes re-echoed and scraped on hogsheads, barrels and wine-casks. The duck learned that these round and hollow vessels were destined later to hold liquid, so he looked upon them as receptacles for some matter resembling water, therefore wicked and dangerous. He drank, however, from the gutter stream, but, like his companions, he avoided wetting his feet.

" One day he heard the men saying to one another, ' It's rising ! ' The duck could not understand the words, but he noticed

their excitement. They closed the air-holes with cement, and built a wall in front of the door. At first the duck thought it was to prevent him from going out, because animals, like human beings, are prone to imagine that things are always done for or against them. And the duck made merry over this folly of theirs! He had never tried to fly; he did not even know that his wings, though clipped, could be used for flying; but he felt quite sure he could get over that ridiculous barrier if he wished.

"In the yard there was an old manger, once used by horses now long dead. The chickens roosted there, and the sitting hens remained day and night in a sort of vat filled with straw. The duck slept with them, because he didn't like climbing.

"Towards the middle of one night he heard strange noises. He heard people calling out further up the street, 'The water is rising quickly! Come away; you cannot stay here.'

"The duck did not know that these cries came from soldiers who manned boats. What surprised him still more was that

the vat in which he was dozing seemed to be moving gently, instead of remaining stationary as it usually did. In the moonlight, he noticed that the manger in which the chickens were perching did not seem so high above his head as before. Animals have their dreams, like men! No doubt, it was a dream!

"Nevertheless, the old Houdan who had hatched him out, flapped her wings despairingly, and jumped with fright when the vat touched the manger, and the duck immediately did likewise. Then he went quietly off to sleep again, for birds never can keep their eyes open after the sun has set; but they wake up at dawn, and the first gleam of day showed him a strange sight.

"Instead of the ground which he had trodden on the day before, all flat and hard, of a beautiful grey colour, and rich in food, he only saw at his feet the yellowish expanse of an unknown element. At first sight it looked firm, but near the walls and in the corners of the yard it rose and fell. It was stealthy, alarming, insidious. The old hen said, with a shiver of fear, 'It's water!'

" The duck's anguish was much greater than that felt by his comrades, because it was not his *instinct* that kept him where he was, but a *law* drummed into him since his childhood. He longed for the water; he desired it intensely, not knowing why he did so; by principle, however, it frightened him. He asked timidly, ' Is it quite, quite true that you can't go down and stand on That, and still be alive ? '

" It was quite natural that he should ask the question in this way, because he didn't know there was such a thing as swimming. But they answered him with an outraged look, ' No, it is impossible ! '

" Some of the hens tried to spring over the wall of the yard. One succeeded, but they heard her fall into the deadly element which was filling the street outside. Others got drowned in the yard itself, after breaking their beaks trying to get through the stones of the walls.

" ' What are we going to do ? ' asked the duck.

" ' Wait ! ' answered the old hen.

" Having always lived among men, she

knew nothing but what came from them, salvation or death! They were the dispensers of all! But the men never came!

"Birds digest their food very quickly, and as quickly suffer and die of hunger. The duck and the hen, too weak to perch now, hid in the corner of the manger.

"After the floods, M. Giscard came back. 'The hens will have died, of course,' said he; 'but the duck must be having the time of his life!'

"The duck, however, had succumbed to the same fate as his comrades. He was discovered lying on his back, with that film, which all dead birds have, over his eyes, and lifting to heaven his webbed feet, especially made for travelling through the water!

"M. Giscard was so thunderstruck at the sight that he quite forgot to mourn his loss. 'Well, I'm blessed,' said he, 'if that chap hadn't been well brought up!'"

Caillou's mother began to laugh.

"You think I'm joking," I said, "but that really did happen, and I'm very sorry

for the duck. If you will only think it over a minute or two, you will see clearly that he was killed by persuasion. All the same, you can look upon the tale as symbolical, and imagine that the duck is either you, myself, or even Caillou, if he should get what is commonly called 'education' too soon, and in the form in which it is given nowadays. Because I consider that it consists in making little French boys lose their personality, my advice to you is to put no faith in it, for Caillou would in no way be the gainer."

CHAPTER XVI

CAILLOU'S CAVALRY

CAILLOU has altered very much lately ; he is now seven years old—a little man who has already rubbed shoulders with the world, and who repeats the opinions expressed by the world, instead of the fresh and spontaneous observations of his own brain. He also quotes his schoolmistresses—for he now goes to the Lycée, and is in the transition class, from which he derives most precise and stereotyped ideas as to war, aeroplanes, and the rivers of Asia. At the time of which I am now going to write, however, he was only five ; he was yet our own Caillou, the Caillou we have loved.

One of his expressions comes suddenly into my head, probably because I am contrasting Caillou past with Caillou present. A day or two ago he referred to his father and

mother as "them," not meaning to be either impertinent or wanting in proper respect, for he still regards his parents with veneration, and is a good little fellow yet; only side by side with these "powers," formerly the only ones known to him, others have arisen—powers that govern the world, and of which he is gradually forming a vague idea as he hears them discussed—governments, priests, gods.

Above all there are his school teachers, one of whom he told me with bated breath "has a brother who is professor at the Sorbonne." Caillou doesn't know precisely what the Sorbonne is, but he concludes that, in a very remote and magnificent way, it is connected with the studies upon which he is just entering. We must not forget besides that he now spends seven or eight hours each day at the Lycée. Of course, he plays about and is being amused the greater part of the time, nevertheless, he really *lives* there now, and only comes home to have his meals, to prepare his lessons for the following day, and to go to bed.

This new life has altered his outlook, and

when he says "them" in speaking of his parents, it is that he sees in them one group of "powers" amongst others. Considered in this light they become of less importance; he compares them with others, therefore he must judge them.

How different he used to be! I remember two years ago Caillou's father came home in a gloomy, irritable frame of mind; far more than his boy, he also comes into daily contact with "powers" to whom he is subordinate, for one must always be ruled by somebody or something.

On that particular day the experience had been an unpleasant one; a quarrel had taken place, and he did not know what might result from it.

The result of an action is only apparent in many cases some considerable time after the action has taken place, and the cruel part of it is that people generally worry and fret until they know for certain what the result is to be. Of course, Caillou's father thought he was in the right, but came home full of anger, and at the same time full of anxiety. He had an enemy—somewhere

there was a man who had a grudge against him, and whom he himself disliked and feared; he made no attempt to disguise the fact that there had been a serious quarrel. Dinner, after this stormy recital, was a sad and silent meal.

"Then I said to him," says Caillou's father, " . . . " The things he said were certainly admirable, or, at any rate, he considered them so, but his wife signed to him to stop. She had always made it a rule never to discuss before the children anything which might lead to the expression of conflicting opinions on the part of her husband and herself. Can one ever be sure how a discussion will end? Is it good to let the children know that the two "heads" are sometimes not of the same opinion? This time they were not of the same opinion; the woman generally acts as minister of finance to the household, and ministers of finance always favour peace. Again, she had discovered that it was always the better plan to wait until the morrow, to allow Caillou's father to sleep on his worries and angry thoughts. He stopped what he was saying.

Caillou, however, felt that something was wrong; he felt it with the delicate and invisible antennæ of his sensitive little soul. He was quite ready to side with his father, however, because he was filled with a secret admiration for manly wrath and strength, and also because, to calm the storm, Caillou's mother treated her husband with gentle attention and redoubled tenderness. At such a time she loved him more than ever, as it were with a mother's love mingled with a species of dread.

Dawn did not bring peace in its train; the quarrel continued, the news spread to friends and relations.

It was then that Caillou's mother showed her admirable common sense. Alone with her husband, she tried hard to soften his anger and calm his combative ardour. Caillou knew nothing of that, in fact, nobody ever knew of it, for when friends discussed the matter, Caillou's mother sided with her husband; she defended and upheld him, and related the affair, at least a hundred times, just as she had heard it related. "Then my husband got on his high horse. . . ."

This expression suddenly struck Caillou. A horse! You know how he loves horses: those swift living wonders that are so much more beautiful than men. You also know that his thoughts form mental pictures. He sees exactly what is said as though it were real natural fact. His father got on his high horse! Where was the horse? Caillou had not the least notion, but he felt sure that the animal existed, that there were many of them. . . . They were not here, at home, but what did that matter? His father must live another life of which he, Caillou, knew nothing. From nine in the morning to six at night he lived a life which belonged to him alone! There could be no doubt whatever about it; it was the real, mysterious, magnificent, unknown life, which belonged to men with beards—the life of fathers.

For certain it was there ("there" was the unknown region where this second life was lived), it was there that Caillou's father kept his horses, his *high* horses! How high, he wondered; no one could tell, but without any doubt they were gigantic, and Caillou's

father rode out on these horses and performed all kinds of wonderful deeds which he called his "work!" It seemed a very exciting and delightful game to Caillou.

Above all, Caillou's father kept his horses for the purpose of fighting (this conclusion resulted naturally, of course, from the cause which brought about the mention of the horse), and Caillou now lived in a splendid dream, but as usual spoke of it to no one. When his father had gone off after breakfast, Caillou's thoughts went with him. He saw magnificent horsemen brandishing swords, neighing steeds trampling down miserable folk who flew here, there and everywhere, seeking to escape the sabre cuts. And without suspecting it in the least, Caillou's father was the richer by a large increase of respect and admiration on the part of his little son. At last there came a day when the apparition of this dream cavalry had become so real and vivid in his every-day existence that Caillou ended by taking Tili into his confidence.

"Father has got some horses 'away'—lots of horses," he told her. "One is white

all over, with shoes as white as pearl, and he is harnessed to a carriage. Then there is another as yellow as an orange, with a mane like your hair, and they gallop and gallop—you can't *think* how they gallop."

His mother, listening, thought he must be raving. Nothing of the kind! he was merely continuing the building of his universe—had he not always done so, ever since he began to think?

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